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**TRAINING COURSE ON HUMAN RIGHTS INFORMATION  
HANDLING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES<sup>8</sup>  
(MANILA, 7 NOVEMBER - 16 DECEMBER 1989)**

**R E P O R T**

by  
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Organised by:  
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Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA)

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## INTRODUCTION

As a network of organizations concerned with information handling on human rights, HURIDOCS aims to set up a decentralized system for recording and exchange. This implies that human rights organizations all over the world strengthen their competence so that they will be able to control the information which they collect, and exchange it with like-minded organizations. Training is an absolute necessity for such a decentralized network, and it has a very prominent place within the Five-year program of HURIDOCS.

Training is of particular importance for human rights organizations in developing countries, where large-scale violations of human rights occur. HURIDOCS intends to hold an annual regional training course on "Human Rights Information Handling in Developing Countries" during the period 1989-1992. These training courses will focus alternatively on the different regions: Latin America, Asia, the Caribbean and Africa, and will be part of the gradual process by which regional focal points will be established. The training courses will consist of a part on theory and practice of human rights and more intensive lectures on human rights information and documentation as well as practical work / application.

At the same time, HURIDOCS will seek to provide assistance to local organizations in preparing and organizing a number of local and regional training courses for documentation workers at basic level. HURIDOCS has already organized various training courses during the last years.

A more global training course for participants from all continents took place in Manila, the Philippines, from 7 November to 16 December of 1988. The course was co-organized by the International Studies Institute of the Philippines (ISIP), the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) and HURIDOCS. It was attended by twenty-five participants, all but one coming from developing countries, who went through an intensive six-week program, consisting of two parts:

1. Human Rights Theory and Practice (two weeks)
2. Human Rights Information Handling Techniques (four weeks).

Although this was the first large-scale course which the NGOs participating in HURIDOCS organized, the participants agreed that their knowledge and skills with regard to human rights information handling had greatly improved, and that they saw new opportunities for networking within their own countries and regions.

On basis of the experiences gained during the Manila course as well as other training courses and workshops, HURIDOCS is developing a manual on human rights documentation work, a first version of which is already available. This manual will be expanded and updated during the next five years, as experience and Third World input grow. It is envisaged that the manuals will be published in English, French and Spanish.

I would like to thank all organizations and individuals which contributed to the success of the course, in particular the co-sponsors: the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) and the International Studies Institute of the Philippines (ISIP). Special thanks go also to Course Leader Kofi Kumado, Course Instructor Aida Noval, special consultant Bjørn Stormorken, all lecturers as well as to Course Secretary Lalaine Sadiwa and the other secretarial staff.

Those who contributed perhaps most to the success of the course, by learning as well as teaching, are the participants, who cannot be thanked enough for their commitment and energy.

We are sure that many of the contacts made during the long course will continue to benefit the human rights movement.

The course was made possible thanks to the generous financial support of the following donors:

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Kumar Rupesinghe  
Chairperson, HURIDOCS

**TRAINING COURSE ON HUMAN RIGHTS INFORMATION HANDLING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: MANILA, THE PHILIPPINES, 7 NOVEMBER - 16 DECEMBER 1988**

**R E P O R T**

**I. Introduction**

Since its creation in 1982, the *Human Rights Information and Documentation System, International* (HURIDOCS) has worked together with others to increase efficiency in the exchange of information among human rights organizations, especially the non-governmental ones.

In pursuance of its mandate and the felt need of a compatible system which facilitates information exchange among the community of human rights advocates, HURIDOCS developed the Standard Formats for bibliographic recording and exchange of information on human rights documents and organizations. Since its development, a large number of non-governmental human rights organizations have adopted the standard formats. However, the advent of computer use and the application of modern information technologies in such organizations have accentuated the manpower needs for these organizations in their desire to be cost-effective as well as efficient handlers of human rights information.

HURIDOCS responded to this new need by devoting more and more of its resources and activities to competence-building among the information practitioners in the human rights organizations. A number of training courses have been held to sharpen and broaden the documentation skills of the documentalists of these organizations. Until now, these courses have been held only at the national and regional levels, and mainly in the "North".

The increasing use of computers and the spread of the new information technology to the less developed countries of the "South" have brought with it a crying need to expand and extend these training courses into the "South".

Thus HURIDOCS, together with the *International Studies Institute of the Philippines* (ISIP) and the *Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates* (PAHRA) organized a six-week intensive training course for third world human rights documentalists on "Human Rights Information Handling in Developing Countries". Applicants were selected according to strict but realistic criteria of background, current activity and future prospects in human rights documentation and information work were carefully evaluated. The course was held at the University of the Philippines Law Complex, Diliman, Quezon City in Manila from 7 November to 16 December, 1988 (see Appendix No. 1 for the training course brochure).

The aims of the course were to:

- increase the knowledge of participants of basic human rights concepts;
- discuss and better understand the importance of information concepts in the promotion and protection of human rights;
- discuss and better understand the importance and potential benefits of compatibility between information systems, standard formats and information supporting tools;
- explore and compare the advantages and disadvantages of both manual and computerized environments;
- intensively train participants in the use of bibliographic standard formats and other supporting tools in information handling;
- encourage participants to take the lead in promoting the use of standard formats and other information handling tools and techniques in their own organizations and countries;
- train participants in training and teaching techniques in order to achieve a multiplier effect through the participants' sharing of what they have learned with others involved in documentation and information handling;
- provide a forum where the participants can share and learn from each other's experiences and exchange views;

- try to develop realistic longer-term programs of cooperation and coordination among the participants and the organizations to which they belong;
- in general, to raise the level of awareness, competence and professional skills in information and documentation work in the area of human rights and development.

The course combined lectures on conceptual and technical issues, with more time devoted to the latter (see Appendix No. 2 for the training course program). There were two distinct parts:

1. Human Rights Theory and Practice
2. Human Rights Information Handling Techniques.

Two weeks were devoted to the first part, during which the emphasis was on the more conceptual and theoretical aspects of the international human rights regime and the contextual-national and international - in which the human rights norms operate. Four weeks were allocated to the second part, the more technical part of the programme. Hands-on training on the computer was provided during the first part of the course for participants without experience of computer handling. The last three weeks of the programme had continuous hands-on computer training for concrete application of software using the HURIDOCs Standard Formats.

A variety of educational methods and techniques - lectures, group discussions, role-playing, workshops and practical work - were employed for the transmission of the necessary competence throughout the course. Lectures with an active dialogue between participants and lecturers were preferred; these were usually followed by a plenary session. Participants were requested to prepare reports of daily proceedings and various short pieces of written work, and to make oral presentations on various issues. Subject-oriented workshops were held to focus on certain issues through deliberations amongst participants. Role-playing was also undertaken once; video films, overhead projections and charts were used during various sessions. Selected reading materials, bibliographical suggestions and working materials such as serials, documents and copies of the formats for practical work were regularly distributed. The bibliographical materials for the practical exercises as well as access to their own facilities were kindly provided by the University of Philippines Law Library. Tutorials, individual or in group, were also available upon request in order to clarify or strengthen topics dealt with during the lectures.

Mr. Kofi Kumado of the Faculty of Law, University of Ghana, Legon and Ms. Aida Maria Noval of the Mexican Academy for Human Rights were, respectively, Course Leader and Rapporteur / Instruction Coordinator. They were responsible for ensuring the smooth running of the course generally, coordinating the various lectures and other activities, giving guidance to discussions and synthesizing lectures, providing the necessary tutorials and ensuring participants even and optimal learning by acting as facilitators of the process. Valuable advice was given in weekly planning and evaluation meetings by the representatives of the co-sponsors, PAHRA and ISIP, Prof. Rosalinda Ofreneo in particular, who joined Mr. Kumado and Ms. Noval; and Ms. Lalaine Sadiwa, who was in charge of the secretariat. The efficient and always amiable secretarial and administrative support was a key element in the coordination of the course.

## II. Lectures and discussions

(see Appendix No. 3 for an overview of topics and lecturers and Appendix No. 5 for the full summaries of the lectures and discussions)

The task of introducing the training course, the invited guests and the participants was performed by Prof. M. Magallona, Director of the International Studies Institute of the Philippines, which was one of the sponsors of the course. The inauguration of the course was reviewed by two Philippine newspapers.

The official opening ceremony and welcome address on behalf of the University of the Philippines was kindly performed by *Dr. Ernesto G. Tabujara*, Chancellor of the University of the Philippines. Dr. Tabujara briefly reviewed the historical development of humanity and noted that, over the years, a lack of consciousness on human rights issues has often delayed major changes needed to achieve their respect and full enjoyment. He stressed the importance of human rights documentation work in raising public awareness of today's situation of widespread violations. In this context, he praised the course as being not only necessary but timely. He welcomed participants and organizers to the Philippines and in particular to the University, and wished them success.

*Senator Wigberto Tanada*, Chairperson of the Senate Human Rights Committee, delivered the keynote address. Speaking under the title Human Rights Advocacy: Documentation, Solidarity and Struggle, he began by noting how ironic it was that in spite of the general acceptance of the principles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, these rights are still violated in many countries around the world. While on the whole, there seemed to exist world-wide sufficient laws designed to uphold these rights, the necessary will and desire to enforce them have been lacking. A gap has thus developed between the stated aspirations and their enforcement.

The honorable Senator stressed importance of praising and acknowledging the courageous stand, the commitment and risks taken by activists throughout the developing countries of the so-called Third World. Human rights advocates have themselves become the targets of repression. The record of human rights activists who have been murdered, detained, tortured or subjected to all kinds of harassment throughout the Third World countries has been alarming and, recent developments suggest, has been growing. The tools needed to tackle the problem could no longer be treated in isolation. For the task was beyond any single organization, country or advocate. It required solidarity and collaborative efforts on a wide scale, and the work of non-governmental organizations in this respect has been critical.

Senator Tanada drew attention to the complexity and diversity of human rights work and the creative talents needed. He was of the view that the provision of objective, professional and accurate documentation which lent itself to easy and expeditious dissemination was not only essential but absolutely crucial to the effectiveness of the work of human rights advocates.

The information provided must be credible as well as comprehensive. It must be seen by all forces of society, including those hostile to the cause of human rights, as "unimpeachable". It required constant refining of the information processing system to meet the challenges and potential of new technology to address the violations of human rights on the massive scale that we have all become witnesses to in today's world. Senator Tanada invited the audience to recognize that effective and efficient human rights information handling and documentation would help the militant forces of peace and development to triumph against those of violence and dehumanization. Lives would be saved and violations deterred or discouraged thereby.

While the future remained bleak, the Senator was encouraged, he said, by initiatives such as the present training course. By emphasizing competence-building in human rights information handling in developing countries, such courses would ensure that the cause of human rights would ultimately triumph. He praised the vision of the organizers and expressed the hope that, in the interests of humanity, the participants would apply themselves assiduously to the course.

The closing remarks were given by the Course Leader, *Mr. Kofi Kumado* from Ghana. He said that the course was significant for three reasons. Firstly the participants were from organizations operating in developing countries. Secondly, it was taking place in a developing country. And thirdly, the host country was the Philippines whose Constitution, formulated after the recent demonstration by her people of their sovereign right to rid themselves of a dictator, made clear commitments to the people's right to information and communication - an issue whose realization was the raison d'être of the present course.

Often, he noted, human rights workers were so busy generating information that little time was devoted to recording it for dissemination to fellow advocates. Being thus unaware of the work of others in the same field, we were constantly engaged in "re-inventing the wheel". But given the slenderness of our resources, we can ill-afford such an approach. What we needed most were the solidarity and support which we could give each other. He invited the participants to reflect on the information needs of the cause of human rights especially during this year in which we celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He was particularly glad that the course was taking place at this time when we have all become witnesses to the vast explosion in information technology. This development underscored the importance of being able to record and disseminate what we record in forms and systems that make it possible for us to share and utilize our information more efficiently.

Consequently, Mr. Kumado stressed, the course was aimed at "training the trainers". Namely, sharing the information handling skills in such a way that the participants would be able to duplicate what they would learn in their own countries and regions. One of the expectations of the sponsors was that the sum total of these duplications would further increase the quality and, therefore, the credibility of the information coming from the non-governmental human rights organizations.

On behalf of HURIDOCs and the co-sponsors, PAHRA and ISIP, the course leader thanked the University of the Philippines at Diliman generally and its College of Law in particular for placing the necessary pedagogical facilities at the disposal of the course.

The first session of the course was devoted to the participant introductions (see Appendix No. 4 for the list of participants). The 26 participants, 15 from Asia, 7 from Latin America, 2 from Africa, 1 from Palestine and 1 from the United States, were requested to introduce themselves and their personal background, to briefly describe the mandate, structure and activities of their organizations and to explain the specific work in which they were involved. Based on this, participants were asked to express their expectations from the course.

As expected, all participants were somehow involved in information or documentation handling in various subject areas related to human rights and development. Their expectations from the course reflected common interests which could be summed up in the following way: to broaden their knowledge and understanding of human rights concepts; to identify and clarify human rights issues critical to their work; to acquire, improve and upgrade their skills and knowledge of documentation systems, procedures and tools; to seek standardization in recording and exchange of information; to acquire first-hand experience and an overall understanding of automated systems for recording and retrieving information. Finally, participants expected to share experiences and know-how with fellow participants and resource people and to exchange information within a possible network of similar organizations. On the technical aspects, particular mention was made of the need to discuss classification and indexing schemes as well as retrieval methods suitable to human rights information work. At different times during the course, participants presented aspects of their work, shared experiences, new projects, mentioned specific needs and suggested creative solutions to identified difficulties. Some of these presentations were structured, but most were delivered spontaneously during the discussion of specific issues.

The starting point of the first part of the programme was a two-day lecture by *Prof. Reynaldo Ty* on the History and Philosophy of Human Rights. This was a comprehensive presentation of both the historical development of society, including its main components and actors, and of the philosophical development of ideas and beliefs that have shaped the world through the ages. A particular analysis was made of contemporary history and the current conjuncture of Third World countries. Prof. Ty then presented the history and philosophy of the concept and practice of human rights through history. To this purpose, the lecturer made an illuminating analysis of the works of the world's great thinkers and philosophers as well as of the trends and major events during each historical period up to the present. Particular aspects discussed



during Prof. Ty's lecture referred to the universality of rights, whether civil, political, social, economic or cultural; who bears the responsibility for their protection; and the need and arguments for viewing them from both a moral and a legal perspective.

The subject of International Law of Human Rights was covered by *Prof. Merlin Magallona*, who spoke on the development of contemporary international law from a historical perspective and identified the most salient events that resulted in the establishment of the United Nations and the conception of human rights as part of the international ordre public. The lecturer presented a thorough analysis of the concepts and principles which underlie the UN Charter and other international instruments, and identified various problems encountered in the prevailing definitions and their applicability. In particular, the delicate relationship between international protection and domestic jurisdiction as well as the status and access that States and individuals have to international mechanisms of protection were reviewed in relation to the two Covenants and to other international instruments. Prof. Magallona also presented a brief introduction to European, African, American and Asian developments in regional protection of human rights.

*Mr. Kofi Kumado* further developed the previous subject in speaking on the relationship between Municipal Law (meaning the domestic laws of a country including its constitution) and Public International Law rules as this relationship affects the application of International Human Rights Law. Mr. Kumado outlined the major characteristics of two basic schools of thought: Monism and Dualism. After analysing the underlying principles and legal considerations of both systems, Mr. Kumado explained how these are translated into practical terms when a State ratifies an international human rights agreement. He then described the effect that the respective laws have on the work of a human rights NGO, and explained that if the NGO operates in a monist system, it must work for ratification of the international instruments and thereafter add it to its array of weapons. On the other hand, if the NGO operates in a dualist system, it cannot stop at ratification but must also work to have the international convention transformed into domestic law.

International Humanitarian Law and the role of ICRC, with particular reference to its documentation methods and the work of the Central Tracing Agency, were the subjects introduced by *Mr. Philip Sordet* and *Mr. Pierre Delacoste*. They spoke on the historical development of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the principles upon which it is based and how it differs from Human Rights Law. Next, the implementation of International Humanitarian Laws was explained, as were the structure, objectives, role and specific tasks of the ICRC and the Red Cross. During the discussion that followed, particular attention was given to the implementation of Protocol II and the difficulties in determining whether an internal conflict can be said to exist. The functions, work, filing systems and documentation techniques of the Central Tracing Agency (CTA) were explained by Mr. Sordet, followed by a discussion of specific issues such as safety and security of files and speed in the retrieval process.

*Prof. Vitit Muntarbhorn* provided acute insight into the practice of human rights work in the national and international arenas in his lecture on the Roles and Functions of Inter-Governmental and Governmental Human Rights Organizations. He first presented a critical analysis of the contextual issues and the main actors, both national and international, which may intervene in the human rights situation of a given country. In this context, it was mentioned that little care is given to the prevention of human rights violations, since most efforts emerge after these have occurred and are therefore geared towards protection, cure and promotion. Prof. Muntarbhorn explained that the development of inter-governmental organizations can be viewed in the historical perspective of the nation and state-building consolidation processes of this century as well as by highlighting crucial events such as the emergence of the League of Nations. He then turned to the complex structure of the United Nations system, its functions, roles and specialized agencies and organs, in particular the General Assembly, ECOSOC, the Human Rights Commission and the Sub-commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. An introductory explanation of the procedures and

mechanisms for lodging complaints and communications to the UN was given, based on the texts of the relevant resolutions. Prof. Muntabhorn concluded his presentation with an introduction to the composition, structure, procedures and instruments of the European, American and African regional systems. The absence of a regional Asian system for the protection of human rights was examined on the basis of a contextual analysis of the regional situation.

The particular roles and functions of governmental human rights offices and institutions, based on the Philippine experience, were presented by *Ms. Purificacion V. Quisumbing* and *Mr. Abelardo Aportadera*. In two different sessions, both lecturers analyzed the recent history and current situation of the Philippines, including a survey of the legal provisions for human rights protection, particularly in the Constitution, and explained how their respective offices operate within the prevailing context.

Ms. Quisumbing further analysed the Philippine government's adherence to international instruments of protection and their effect on domestic human rights laws. She then provided a detailed presentation of the work of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, whose main focus of attention are the rights of Filipino workers abroad. Ms. Quisumbing explained the structure, mandate and objectives of the institution and the main issues it deals with. Questioned on the root causes that make the existence of the Office necessary, the lecturer moved on to an analysis of what she identified as the three determinant factors which shape the human rights situation in the country: historical, structural and institutional and socio-psychological. Ms. Quisumbing concluded her intervention by evaluating the role played by government offices in the overall struggle for human rights protection.

*Commissioner Abelardo Aportadera* further developed the topic from the perspective and experience of the Philippine Commission of Human Rights (PCHR). The lecturer explained the establishment of the PCHR, its structure, primary concerns and objectives, its mode of operation with one central and various regional offices and its investigatory and prosecutory powers. Com. Aportadera further explained particular tasks undertaken by the PCHR in relation to education, dissemination of information, the reporting system based on a standard format and the concern to seek standardization of figures and statistics, particularly with those provided by NGOs. The criteria followed by both instances and the implied definitions of human rights violations were discussed at length by the participants. In response to specific questions, the lecturer expanded on the relationship between the Commission and human rights NGOs as well as on the role played by a governmental commission in the protection of human rights.

**Roles and Functions of Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Developing Countries** was the title of a lecture given by *Sister Mariani Dimaranan* from the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines. She began by depicting the deplorable living conditions of the majority of human beings and the prevalence of human rights violations in most developing countries. In this context, Sister Mariani discoursed on the intrinsic nature and commitment of non-governmental organizations and their catalytic and dynamic role. The lecturer distinguished three particularly important functions in NGO work: education, standard-setting and the identification, prevention and pursuit of solutions to stop human rights violations. These remain fundamental tasks, independent of whether NGOs concentrate on fact-finding missions, documentation, welfare, legal assistance or dissemination of information. A further issue discussed by the lecturer was the essential and unique role played by NGOs in establishing and cultivating communication with international institutions such as the United Nations or the regional systems so that opinions and ideas can be transmitted to these fora. The speaker provided insight into the risks, problems and difficulties inherent in human rights advocacy and presented strong arguments for strengthening solidarity amongst NGOs in order to better confront these difficulties. Sister Mariani concluded by calling for the creation of a South-South system of NGOs that can enable the movement to fulfil better its great responsibility in improving the situation of human rights.

In further workshop deliberations, participants discussed NGOs practice, giving particular attention to research, investigation and documentation of human rights situations. The following problems faced by NGOs were identified and analyzed: communication with related organizations is deficient; there is a general scarcity of resources, particularly financial, and a need for training and for greater professionalism; there are inherent difficulties in operating in local and national settings because such work is seen as antagonistic to the government and therefore becomes subject to harassment and repression. Thus, cooperation, exchange and solidarity amongst human rights NGOs was considered essential since they share one common objective, face similar problems and, above all, because the people they are concerned about -those whose rights are violated - and the violations suffered, are strikingly and sadly similar.

As a concrete example of the work of a human rights non-governmental organization, *Ms. Agneta Pallinder* presented the mandate, structure, activities and procedures of Amnesty International, with particular reference to its documentation work. The research and information processes at the International Secretariat were explained, from the reception of case information, its legal validation and contextualization with background information, to the policy considerations and the decision on the most suitable action to take. Two crucial aspects for efficient intervention were analyzed: time and speed in implementing an action and, at the same time, very strictly assessing and verifying the sources and the legal and contextual information underlying the case. Validation and sifting of information has to be as objective and accurate as possible, even though the product of this work, an urgent action or a report, cannot be considered politically neutral. The deliberations that followed the lecture touched on several issues. Firstly, there was consensus amongst participants on the recognition and respect gained by Amnesty International as a provider of credible and reliable information, although problems and delays in the acquisition of its publications were detected. It was also debated that sometimes it is difficult to understand the limitations of the mandate of Amnesty International, particularly because it is basically concerned with civil and political rights, with restricted or no practical recognition of other rights which in developing countries are overwhelmingly important: namely those stemming from socioeconomic conditions and the constant violations that occur in this area.

A recapitulation and consolidation of the complex subject of structures and procedures of inter-governmental organizations was conducted by *Mr. Manfred Nowak* and *Mr. Hans Thoolen* in their lecture The United Nations and Regional Systems: Structure and Procedures. The lecturers presented the procedures established under international and regional human rights instruments. These procedures were closely examined and their effectiveness assessed, in terms of how they are implemented within the systems and of the access that individuals, NGOs and States have to them. The procedures looked at in detail were: state reports and inter-state complaints and individual complaints under the specific human rights treaties; complaints under ECOSOC resolution 1503; ex-officio enquiries under ECOSOC resolution 1235 and other special procedures developed by the UN Commission on Human Rights; preventive action; assistance to victims and political action. Other issues discussed were the role played by NGOs in the systems and the significance, usefulness and requirements of consultative status; the meaning and ways of determining the existence of a "systematic pattern of gross violations of human rights". In the group discussion that followed, participants concluded that the procedures in the universal and regional systems must not be underestimated but should rather be appraised critically in terms of their practical utilization. Consensus was achieved on the need to strengthen the regional systems and instruments and on the important role that NGOs can play in these fora.

In the lectures and discussions during the first ten days of the course, the role and characteristics of the information needed for the protection of human rights was touched upon from various disciplines and perspectives. *Dr. Kumar Rupesinghe* approached the main subject of the course in depth and wrapped up the conceptual and ideological issues of information and communication in his lecture on the Politics and Sociology of Information. The speaker began by pointing out that information handling is crucial as is the need for NGOs to effectively manage and control their information and have it in the right form of delivery at the right

time. Dr. Rupesinghe then outlined the evolution and socio-political characteristics of information structures from the feudal social system to the capitalist society. Within the latter, a controversial analysis was made of the control of information being both a pre-condition and a means of holding and exercising power in international relations between developed and developing countries and within a national context where those with power also control and withhold information from the people. The lecturer also reviewed the impact of advanced computer and telecommunications technology as a further characteristic of the information system. He then singled out and evaluated the challenges faced by NGOs in the prevailing information structure and put forward strong arguments for the creation of a new, alternative international information order.

Dr. Rupesinghe went on to stress that, given the characteristics and needs of the NGO movement, conditions are propitious for the development of an NGO information system that can enable the member organizations to become the countervailing power to that of the violators, and thus become more competent in their work. The speaker examined the need to establish a common language of communication through the use of standard formats. He concluded by explaining the concept of HURIDOCS as a linking network of human rights non-governmental organizations within which certain activities are undertaken in order to improve the forms and means of communication and exchange.

In the discussion that followed, various issues were debated at length: amongst others, the real extent to which member organizations of a network can preserve their integrity and autonomy, particularly in relation to a possible division of labour; the practicality of the latter was critically analysed by participants, as was the concept of an alternative NGO global information system. It was concluded that, as a first step towards a wider network, an effective horizontal information and communication system at the local level had to be sought; and that in order to achieve this, training was vital, as were the standard formats for recording, and more importantly, for exchanging information.

The third week of the course was conducted by *Ms. Lise Bruun* who lectured on **Information and Documentation Handling Systems and Processes**. During this period, the concept, components and ways of analysing an information system were presented followed by a theoretical presentation and practical work on each one of the processes involved in documentation handling. More specifically, these were: input through generation or collection of information; bibliographic and contents description; classification, storage and filing; and output for retrieval and dissemination. Particular stress was placed on achieving compatibility through standardization of tools and processes. Several practical sessions were devoted to recording on the HURIDOCS Standard Formats for bibliographical units and periodical publications. During lectures and discussions, the particularities of human rights information and documentation were treated in detail. Ms. Lise Bruun provided a manual with the basic definitions, additional readings and several relevant examples, thereby providing participants with a useful reference tool to consult, both during the course and in their daily practice later on.

As two of the stated objectives to be accomplished during the last three weeks of the programme were to train participants intensively in the use of bibliographical standard formats and to provide them with the basic theoretical and practical elements of computerized information handling, an **introductory hands-on computer training course** was offered during the first three weeks. This training was conducted by *Mr. Jojo Chan* and *Ms. Aida Maria Noval*, with the valuable collaboration of the participant Mr. Carlos Saldarriaga from APRODEH, a Peruvian organization.

A survey of the participants' level of competence in the use of computers showed a significant gap between those who had sound experience and those who had never used them. The range of expertise between the two extremes was varied, so gradual training was required in order to achieve homogeneity in computer handling by the fourth week when intensive practical application of software and programming techniques were planned.

The basic formal training was scheduled for the week-ends of the first two weeks of the course, total twelve hours. Practical exercises set in advance and the use of a self-teaching typing programme were organized during weeks two and three in order to provide participants with as much practice as possible. The training covered basic notions of hardware; the functions and use of the system components, particularly booting and agility in the use of the keyboard; and basic operations with internal and external DOS commands. A total of 18 participants underwent this introductory training, with very satisfactory results.

The subject of Computerized Information Handling was conducted by *Mr. Bjørn Stormorken* who competently introduced participants to the intricacies of computers, software and automated data processing. The lecturer led participants up to a level of proficiency that enabled them not only to accurately evaluate automation and software packages for use in their respective places of work, but also to efficiently instal and use application programmes.

Of particular importance was the production of a data base using DBase III+ where each participant defined and programmed a mailing list. The latter was done in order to produce indexes, search and retrieve information and create specific products. Also, the thorough learning and application of the Bibsys programme, using the HURIDOCs standard formats for bibliographical dependent, independent and serial units, resulted in a specific data base developed by the participants, who not only practiced recording in the formats but also learnt search and retrieval techniques, generation of indexes and inverted files, output of printed lists and catalogue cards and data packaging for exchange using the Bibtext programme. The technical aspects of standardization required for electronic exchange of information were also looked at in detail.

During these sessions, very useful materials written by Mr. Stormorken were distributed to participants. The documents provided in-depth presentations and explanations on the various subjects covered, from a survey of computers to detailed instructions on the use of Bibsys. Through discussions and practical confrontation of the theory and guidelines contained in the documents, participants managed to improve and refine their content further.

Two topics of special interest were discussed within the framework of the main subject covered by Mr. Stormorken: "Data Security and Protection" and "Information Technology and Social Issues". On the first topic, a distinction was made between data protection and data legislation, the latter being part of the national context in which an NGO works. Two main subjects were discussed: physical security measures to restrict access of unauthorized personnel to the data stored, and the protection provided by software for the same purpose. Emphasis was on the fact that security measures have to be proportional to the importance of keeping information safe, and must be carefully selected so that they deal adequately with the risks detected.

The subject of "Information Technology and Social Issues" was presented by two participants, *Ms. Vyva Aguirre* and *Mr. German Palacio* from the Philippines and Colombia. Their presentation provided a survey of the meaning, sources, recipients and forms of technology transfer and an analysis of its impact on society, particularly on developing societies, in relation to such issues as: information technology as power; its impact on production and therefore on the labour force; its effects on education; increased social fragmentation and individualization that can result from it, and the possible use of technology to exercise stronger forms of social surveillance and control.

After an intense discussion, participants concluded that "neutrality" of information technology would be a wrong assumption, since it has always been true that information and knowledge are power. There was general acknowledgment that, on the one hand, technology already exists and it is having a strong impact upon society; on the other, that technology is not only necessary but desirable to have. However, the most important aspect of technology is the use made of it and for whose benefit it is applied. In this sense, it was mentioned that NGOs should play an

active role in adapting and modifying, and perhaps even in creating and developing technology that serves the needs, interests and goals of those whom NGOs are concerned with and work for. It was considered important to be part of the historical process in technology and not to be dragged, or worse still, be overpowered by it.

Of particular interest was the discussions on the Standard Formats for Events currently being developed by the HURIDOCs Task Force under the leadership of Ms. Judith Dueck. The Task Force met in Manila from 16-20 November, and joined the course on November 19 to share their objectives, ideas, products and difficulties in carrying out their assignment with the participants who offered constructive observations in relation to the definitions and concepts underlying the design of the formats. The discussion strengthened the view that the development of a common terminology of human rights is a "must" to be pursued within the HURIDOCs network and that such a tool would be of great help in the conceptualization and further development of the Standard Formats for Events.

In another session devoted to the same issue after participants had undergone intensive training on the use of the HURIDOCs bibliographical standard formats, new contributions were made. There was consensus that Standard Formats on Events should be developed and the achievements of the Task Force were amply recognized. Standardization was needed for exchange in order to improve intervention. However, this definition was considered insufficient for practical purposes of designing the formats. On the one hand, two different needs had to be reconciled: one of a technical nature and another intrinsic to the intervention itself. On the other hand, the needs of the local NGOs which seek solidarity for a particular action also have to be matched with the requirements of the NGOs who receive the information, whether national or international. Further reflections referred to whether the standard formats designed for exchange also cater adequately for local data recording. As the main conclusions of the debate, there was general agreement on the following: the need for Standard Formats on Events is unquestionable although further attempts need to be made to identify clearly and conceptually define "why" they are necessary; the overall purpose of communication should be the guiding principle in developing standard formats for information exchange. There may be too many and different needs to cover in one set of formats, such as the local recording needs, the local requirements to integrate data in the NGO's system and the purpose of exchanging public information for intervention. It was suggested that the standard formats currently being developed should first tackle the most urgent requirement of an efficient communication tool for exchange purposes.

The subject of Electronic Exchange of Information was dealt with by *Mr. Dave Spooner*, who gave two days of lectures on the theoretical aspects of the matter. He also conducted practical demonstrations on accessing and searching in a London located electronic mailbox and in the use of an encrypting programme to encode information before its transmission.

The lecturer surveyed electronic exchange of information and explained in detail four telecommunication systems: one computer to another through cable and through the use of a modem; the local Bulletin Board System (BBS) and the use of mailboxes; the International Bulletin Board; and the Packet Switching Network (PSN). The main characteristics of each of these systems as well as their modes of operation, possible uses, advantages and disadvantages were explained and discussed. In particular, the security aspect of transmitting data using electronic means was looked at, and a thorough analysis was made of the considerations that need to be taken into account: availability of technology; the level of development and reliability of the national computer net-work and telephone system; the initial and running costs involved and the fact that computer languages used for electronic exchange are based on the romanian script and are therefore not suitable for transmitting in other alphabets.

For most participants, the wide-reaching possibilities of electronic exchange of information were new. Participants became very interested in keeping informed of developments within the

HURIDOCS network. They felt the need to explore the situation in their own countries and discuss the subject within their organizations.

On 16 December, the closing ceremony was conducted by *Prof. Merlin Magallona*, Director of ISIP. He briefly outlined the event that was about to conclude and highlighted its main objectives, characteristics and attainments. Prof. Magallona then introduced *Attorney Augusto Sanchez*, Chairperson of PAHRA.

Attorney Sanchez shared his thoughts on the commitments and ultimate objectives of human rights advocacy and congratulated participants and organizers for having successfully achieved the objectives proposed for the course. The speaker stressed that by having had the opportunity to undergo this training, participants had acquired new commitments to reproduce and recreate their enhanced knowledge and skills and to foster a more efficient dissemination of information so as to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights.

*Representative Anna Dominique Coseteng* delivered the closing speech in which she outlined some of the most compelling demands imposed by human rights work and stressed the need to keep on struggling with renewed energy, creative ideas and ever increasing professionalism in order to achieve the ultimate objective shared by human rights advocates: respect and full enjoyment by all human beings of their inherent human rights. Rep. Coseteng then presented each participant with a certificate of attendance.

Prof. Magallona, as representative of one of the co-sponsoring organizations, congratulated the successful conclusion of this very important event, which he defined as a landmark in training human rights advocates and from the experience of which much could be learnt for future endeavours.

### III. Conclusions and recommendations

The general conclusions and recommendations from the course are the following:

- the possibilities for HURIDOCS to expand its activities in training, advice and assistance regarding documentation processes in general has to be explored;
- HURIDOCS' role to foster standardization and compatibility through the use of Standard Formats should continue;
- the possibilities of an Internship Programme within the network should be explored;
- in addition to formal training, consideration should be given to the feasibility of meetings to exchange experience and know-how amongst member organizations, particularly at the regional level;
- to increase the flow of information within the network with the active collaboration of member organizations, who are called upon to share their work and experience, initially through the HURIDOCS newsletter and later on, perhaps through the development of Regional HURIDOCS newsletters or other means of regular communication.

It was strongly recommended that the results of the course should be compiled into a "Training manual on computerized information handling and the use of the HURIDOCS Standard Formats" and distributed within the HURIDOCS network, as soon as possible.

It is suggested to develop a comprehensive and analytical index to the contents of the book "HURIDOCS standard formats for the recording and exchange of information on human rights" by Mr. Bjørn Stormorken, to make it more effective as a reference manual. In both manuals, it is suggested to treat more explicitly the subjects of: bibliographical level, corporate authorship and conferences. It is also advised to include a general introduction concerning the various punctuation marks and symbols used for recording.

High priority should be given to developing the Standard Formats on Events already produced by the HURIDOCs Task Force. These formats are vital for human rights work and their dissemination should greatly benefit the work of NGOs.

In addition to the existing HURIDOCs SF, and to those currently under elaboration, it is recommended that work be undertaken on the definition, design and test of other standard formats necessary to record data on certain categories of documents central to human rights work, namely press clippings, case law and audio-visual materials.

Recommendations for specific revision in the bibliographical standard formats include the following fields: "Availability"; "ISBN / ISSN / Document symbol"; "Date" and "Index".

Further, it was strongly recommended to tackle the development of a human rights controlled vocabulary within the HURIDOCs network, through the input of centres which have done work in this area, and seeking the advice of experts on technical aspects. This necessary tool should preferably be codified with alphabetical entries in English, French and Spanish. To this purpose, the formation or revitalization of a Task Force on Indexing and Thesaurus is suggested. In addition to developing a commonly agreed-upon documentary language for content description, the Task Force could act as a "think tank" to provide basic guidelines for documentation centres in the compilation, structure and compatibility of their own lists of descriptors. Since every centre generally undertakes such an enterprise, it would be useful if, within the network, similar procedures could be followed so as to make compatibility easier.

The Language Codes, as they stand now, are not suitable for recording vernaculars. It is suggested that either Supporting Document No. 4 should be completed following the ISO codes, or else the particular ISO norm and the HURIDOCs guidelines to adopt specific codings should be indicated.

#### IV. Evaluation

There was agreement among participants, coordinators, organizers and co-sponsors that the general and particular objectives of the course were, on the whole, successfully attained. Participants expressed an overall sense of achievement and a patent acknowledgement of having acquired new skills and a more holistic view of both advocacy and documentation work, the latter being appreciated as an important element of change.

In particular, the subject of "Computerized Information Handling" was considered the most fruitful part of the programme. In general, all parts of the course were considered useful, valuable and informative, although critical assessment was made of the following issues which relate to the form and content of the programme:

Learning was made somewhat more difficult due to several reasons - amongst others, the length of the course in general, and the time allocated to certain subjects in particular were considered too long. The daily working hours were also excessively long and not enough time was allowed for reading and studying. The background reading material was extensive, well chosen and excellent in the information it contained. However, it was not optimized, as it was delivered late and there was not enough time to read it. A suggestion was made for further courses that the introductory material be delivered at least one month in advance, that further supporting documents be delivered at least a week before the subject is presented, and that time slots be allocated for reading and studying.

The pedagogical methods followed were not always suitable to the subjects treated. Particularly during the first three weeks of the course, the delivery was traditional and passive. The objective of "training participants as trainers" was felt to be achieved only partially.



The number and importance of topics to be covered under the general subject of "Information and Documentation Handling Systems and Processes" were incompletely treated, specially the processes of indexing and classification. It was suggested that in future, the contents should be structured differently, with more time devoted to practice and perhaps to have two lecturers in charge. It was also suggested to devote more time to the standard formats for events and in general, to conduct practice on standard formats with materials and cases closer to the real practice of human rights documentalists.

On the programme, the link between human rights and development was not adequately addressed. Some parts of the course were seen as vague and repetitive, particularly in relation to the international protection of human rights; paradoxically, the human rights instruments, particularly the regional ones, were not discussed properly. The treatment of rights and violations was considered superficial in some cases. In particular, the types of human rights violations and the context in which they are perpetrated were scarcely presented or discussed. A particular shortcoming was the absence of elements of analysis and assessment for decision making on the types of action or intervention to take in particular situations. In this sense, most of the lectures were considered informative but not formative.

Sharing and exchange of experience and know-how amongst participants mainly took place informally within the time constraints imposed by the intensity of the programme. A suggestion was made that in future courses there be more time allocated to participants' presentation of their work.

The selection of participants was unclear in regard to their level of expertise and previous experience, particularly in relation to practical involvement in documentation work.

As for the choice of venue, the Philippines was considered an excellent selection, as was the University of the Philippines. However, the fact of having to spend sometimes up to twelve hours in the same room was considered unsuitable.

In relation to general organizational matters: for most participants, reception at the airport was not only efficient but welcoming. Accommodation was adequate although not conducive to either relaxation or study due to the particular characteristics of the Danarra Hotel. Food was a recurrent problem, due to the set lunch served daily in the working room in plastic containers and to the allowance for other meals which was considered insufficient. Health was also a recurrent problem; although arrangements had been made for health insurance and for the UP Clinic to provide medical attention at reduced cost, the insurance did not cover medical expenses nor the purchase of medicines, which had to be borne by participants.

A particular criticism was made in relation to the fact that the Coordinating Committee did not have a participant representative. It was assessed that this would have greatly improved communication between participants and coordinators in terms of a dialogue, feedback and positive criticism.

On a general note, it was accepted that the above evaluation went beyond the more limited objectives pursued in the programme. It was agreed by the course leaders and the participants that, as a first global training course, it was perhaps the most important to learn from its organization and development.

Rapporteur:  
Aida Maria Noval  
January, 1989

**NB:** The HURIDOCS Continuation Committee has reproduced the above report including some of the critical elements in particular in the evaluation as described by the rapporteur and without comment. However, not all specific recommendations are necessarily consistent with each other. Although the opinions expressed provide guidance for future courses, not every recommendation will be implemented.

## APPENDIX 1

### TRAINING COURSE ON HUMAN RIGHTS INFORMATION HANDLING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES MANILA, PHILIPPINES NOVEMBER 7 - DECEMBER 16, 1988

#### I. Summary of proposal

To hold a summer course on "Human Rights Information Handling in Developing Countries" in Manila, Philippines from 7 November to 16 December 1988 for 25 to 30 participants, from human rights documentation centres situated mainly in developing countries, to be co-sponsored by the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA), the International Studies Institute of the Philippines, together with the Human Rights Information and Documentation System, International (HURIDOCs).

#### II. Introduction

Present-day human rights activities cannot be discussed without touching the areas of documentation and information handling. Throughout the last years, human rights organizations, activists and scholars have discovered more and more the importance of efficient documentation work for the dissemination of human rights information, whether for the strengthening of the conceptual / theoretical framework of human rights promotion or for the protection and defense in case of human rights violations. Without accurate and precise information, which provides one of the bases for making sound judgements and well-planned programs of action, the battle against human rights violations is almost surely lost. In the words of Martin Ennals, former Secretary-General of Amnesty International and Chairman of HURIDOCs International Advisory Council, "Information on all aspects of human rights is essential to the universal protection and promotion of human rights. The rapid increase of interest in human rights coincides with the rapid development of information technology. Unless a common and universal system of communication is evolved, valuable information will be wasted, existing international machinery will not function, standards and codes agreed between governments and within professional bodies will not become known and their implementation will not be monitored." Increasingly, also, human rights activist organizations realize that a sustained flow of quality information mobilizes people more easily in promoting universal human rights principles and halting human rights abuses. In effect, the availability of human rights information and its wide public dissemination largely define the activities of action-oriented human rights organizations. The easy access to information on human rights also enables scholars and researchers to produce well-documented, more factual and more realistic analyses of the human rights issues and situations, thus leading to better research outputs.

It is in this context that the Human Rights Information and Documentation System (HURIDOCs) was created as a network through which human rights organizations and individuals can freely and efficiently exchange information and coordinate their activities. However, a prerequisite for such activities is the development of a compatible system which facilitates information exchange and dissemination within the network. Through painstaking efforts, the HURIDOCs bibliographic Standards Formats for the recording and exchange of information on human rights documents and organizations were developed and introduced in a great many, often small, human rights organizations.

In addition, human rights organizations have been in great need for and are demanding the standard formats and supporting tools for the recording of other information, in particular, standard formats for the recording of human rights violation events.

The development of standard formats is just one element in human rights information work, but one which assumes ever greater importance, as an increasing number of non-governmental organizations, both in developed and in developing countries, turn to the use of micro-computers to facilitate the processing of the growing amount of information they accumulate. The advent of computer use and application of modern technology in such organizations, however, is not without problems. Often, the personnel and the organization as a whole are overwhelmed by the shift in the technology. Because of lack of preparation and knowledge, they find themselves unable to cope with such changes.

One of the more serious problems encountered is the lack of trained staff to handle information, be it manually or with computers. Thus, training has been one of the priorities of HURIDOCS in recent years, and training courses have been conducted in different parts of the world. It should be stressed here that HURIDOCS does not concentrate on training people working in computerized environments. It recognizes the fact that many human rights organizations still use manual methods and techniques of recording and processing information, and do not have enough resources to employ modern technology, at least not in the very near future. Training courses are therefore designed for both computerized and manual environments and are adapted to the participants' needs and the organization's programs. HURIDOCS, therefore, aims to train participants on how to use the technology they want, while remaining in control of the process themselves.

### III. Rationale of the project

As mentioned above, a number of training courses have been held in different parts of the world. These, however, were in general not intensive enough and involved participants either from one single country (e.g. Sri Lanka) or region (e.g. Western Europe). In the latter case, this included refugees coming from countries outside Europe, but they are not always able to bring back to their countries of origin what they have learned from the training courses.

It is the long-standing wish of HURIDOCS to bring together in one training course human rights workers from developing regions (Latin America, Africa, Caribbean, and Asia) since they are the ones who are mostly in need of such training courses.

The purpose of such a course is not only to train participants in the use of standard formats and information handling skills, but equally important is to provide a venue where they can share and learn from each others' experiences and express their own views based on their economic, political, cultural and social backgrounds. It will also enable the experts, who give lectures on different topics, to obtain insights into the real needs of different human rights organizations, and from there, to try to improve on existing standards, tools, methods and techniques, making them more appropriate for the users. This process will provide a very productive and fruitful exchange, and will surely enrich each participant's knowledge of realities as well as possibilities in the human rights world. The combined knowledge about what is going on in each others' country or region will help all participants, upon returning to their own countries and organizations, in planning human rights documentation and dissemination activities. It will also be ensured that they use systems which are compatible with others and thus facilitate the exchange of information within the network.

As an illustration could serve the case of Task Force Detainees in the Philippines, which in 1983 was heavily involved in trying to register and publicize systematically certain types of human rights violations occurring in the context of military repression of an armed rebellion. Many questions had to be answered by the organization, including:

- what kind of standard formats to use?
- whether and how to deal with violations by both sides
- how to process the information for international procedures
- how to guide and protect the human rights workers (relation with the church, etc.)

On all these four issues, considerable and relevant experience had been gained, at sometimes high human cost, by human rights documentation centres such as in El Salvador (Socorro Juridico - Tutela Legal). But, as we know now, access to this experience in the form of sharing of practical knowledge, did hardly occur.

#### IV. Why Manila, Philippines ?

By and large, HURIDOCS' activities in the past were held in the North, especially in Europe, although the first large conference was held in Quito, Ecuador in 1982. In line with HURIDOCS' thrust to transfer most of its activities to the South, having the course in the Philippines is an appropriate step in that direction. Other reasons are the following:

- A. Due to the situation in the Philippines its people have long been fighting for the respect of human rights and now finds themselves in the forefront of the international human rights movement;
- B. The Philippines, as a result of its experiences, has seen the birth and mushrooming of numerous human rights organizations and has created through the years a very strong national human rights movement;
- C. Despite the violations of human rights taking place in the country, uniquely enough, it is still possible to hold such a course, and this is partly due to the presence of a very active and strong human rights movement;
- D. The human rights movement in the Philippines, in its many years of struggle, came to realize the importance and role of documentation and information dissemination in the promotion and defense of human rights. Therefore, human rights organizations in the Philippines have initiated and supported activities geared towards the enhancement and improvement of information tools and techniques to enhance their documentation and information programs;
- E. The Philippines can offer a rich environment of people engaged in human rights conceptualization, practical work and advocacy;
- F. Board and lodging for participants, computer rentals, domestic travel expenses and cost of consumables (e.g. paper, computer ribbons, etc.) are cheaper in Manila than in most other cities of the world, especially in Europe, thus limiting the overall costs of implementing the course and compensating for higher international travel expenses.

#### V. Co-sponsors

- A. HURIDOCS, started in 1979 and formally created in 1982, is a non-governmental global network of over one hundred human rights organizations seeking to improve the access to and dissemination of public information on human rights, by developing and implementing more effective, appropriate and compatible information handling methods and techniques. For more information see the enclosed brochure.
- B. The Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) was formally established in August 1986. It is an umbrella organization of over a hundred human rights organizations in the Philippines. Its aim is to unify, strengthen and broaden the human rights movement in the Philippines by coordinating the different activities of the multitudes of human rights organizations existing in the country. It likewise aims to cooperate and coordinate with other human rights organizations and movements all over the world.

- C. The International Studies Institute of the Philippines (ISIP) was established in 1983. Forming part of the Law Complex of the University of the Philippines, it is an independent centre for research concerned with foreign policy questions and development problems.

#### VI. Objectives of the course

- A. to increase the knowledge of participants of basic human rights conceptions;
- B. to discuss and better understand the importance of information concepts in the promotion and protection of human rights;
- C. to discuss and better understand the importance and potential benefits of compatibility between systems, standard formats and information supporting tools;
- D. to explore and compare the advantages and disadvantages of both manual and computerized environments;
- E. to intensively train participants in the use of bibliographic standard formats and other supporting tools in information handling;
- F. to motivate participants to take the lead in the promotion of the use of standard formats and other information handling tools and techniques in their own organizations and countries;
- G. to train participants in training and teaching techniques in order to achieve a multiplier effect through the participants' sharing of what they have learned with others involved in documentation and information handling;
- H. to provide a forum where the participants can share and learn from each others experiences and exchange views;
- I. to try to develop realistic longer-term programs of cooperation and coordination among the participants and the organizations to which they belong;
- J. in general, to raise the level of awareness, competence and professional skills in information and documentation work in the area of human rights and development.

#### VII. Briefdescription of the course

The 1988 Summer Course on Human Rights Information Handling in Developing Countries, which would run for six weeks (7 November –6 December) is a combination of both conceptual as well as technical lectures, with more time devoted to the latter. It will have a strong technical component within a context of action-oriented documentation work.

There are two distinct parts:

- Part I* Human Rights Theory and Practice
- Part II* Human Rights Information Handling

Two weeks will be devoted to the first part, the more conceptual/theoretical part of the course (see VIII A,B,C), while four weeks shall be allocated to the second part, the more intensive technical lectures and practical work/application (hands-on application on computers) (see IX).

Educational methods to be used will mainly be lectures/discussions/workshops for the conceptual/theoretical part, while lectures/discussions (in the morning sessions) and practical work/application (in the afternoon sessions) will be the methods adopted for the technical part. Some evenings will be allotted to films/slide shows, cultural programs and presentations by the participants.

The first part will be handled by three to four lecturers, the second part by two different lecturers.

There shall be an overall course leader, whose task shall be to coordinate the different lectures, give guidance to discussions, synthesize lectures and in general to ensure the smooth-running of the course. It would be greatly preferable if the course leader could be a senior lecturer or equivalent level teacher from a developing country, who would be based in Manila for two months.

# VIII. Course components / Curriculum

## PART I

### A. Human Rights Theory and Practice

1. Historical developments
2. Philosophical perspectives
  - a. Ancient/medieval conceptions of human rights
  - b. Religious conceptions of human rights
  - c. Capitalist/liberal conceptions of human rights
  - d. Socialist/Marxist conceptions of human rights
  - e. Conceptions of human rights in developing countries
  - f. Conceptions of human rights in developed countries
3. Legal perspectives
  - a. Human rights instruments (international and regional)
    - a.1. Universal Declaration, International Covenants and other instruments of the UN
    - a.2. Inter-American Convention on Human Rights
    - a.3. African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
    - a.4. European Convention on Human Rights
    - a.5. Asian region: drafts and non-governmental declarations
  - b. International humanitarian law
4. Categories and "generations" of human rights
  - a. First generation
  - b. Second generation
  - c. Third generation
  - d. Their interrelationship

### B. Human Rights Organizations

1. Role and functions of human rights organizations
  - a. Governmental and intergovernmental organizations: international, regional and national
  - b. Non-governmental organizations: international, transnational, regional, national and local
2. Activities and programs of different human rights organizations (with workshop)

### C. Human Rights and Communication

1. Power politics in communication (global and national)
2. Communication as an instrument for the promotion and protection of human rights, and against abuse and violations of human rights
3. Realities and possibilities in the area of information handling in developing countries (with workshop)
4. Communication networking and the need for a common working language among human rights organizations

A	1 & 2	2 days x 3 hours / day	=	6 hours
A	3	2 days x 3 hours / day	=	6 hours
A	4	1 day x 3 hours / day	=	3 hours
B	-	2 days x 3 hours / day	=	6 hours
C	-	3 days x 3 hours / day	=	9 hours

Total number of hours for Part I	=	<u>30 hours</u>
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## PART II

### D. Human Rights Information Handling

#### 1. Information systems

- a. Definition
- b. Aims
- c. Parts / components
- d. Information system analysis

#### 2. Components of the Information Systems

- a. Input
  - a.1. Generation and collection of information
  - a.2. Criteria for collection
  - a.3. Rules for recording of information (outline), identification, description, retrieval
- b. Processing
  - b.1. Information organization
    - b.1.1. Storage and classification systems
    - b.1.2. Retrieval facilities
  - b.2. Processing tools
    - b.2.1. Different classification / indexing schemes
    - b.2.2. Manual systems
    - b.2.3. Optical coincidence cards
    - b.2.4. Computers
- c. Output
  - c.1. Dissemination
    - c.1.1. Searching
    - c.1.2. Repacking
    - c.1.3. Access methods

#### 3. Recording information

- a. Different recording tools
  - a.1. Bibliographical (existing HURIDOCs standard formats)
  - a.2. Human rights violations/events standard formats
- b. Computer-assisted recording

#### 4. Computers in information handling

- a. Capabilities
  - a.1. Hardware
  - a.2. Software
- b. The computer and its operating system

#### 5. Information retrieval

- a. Definition
- b. DBase III plus - BIBSYS
- c. Different information retrieval packages like SIFT, BRS/Search, etc.

\* Lectures / discussions on D will take place only during the morning sessions (20 days x 1 1/2 hours/day = 30 hours); practical work during afternoon sessions (20 days x 1 1/2 hours/day = 30 hours). Total number of hours for part II is 60 hours.

**IX. Project timetable / Schedule of the course**

December	- discussion among co-sponsors, organizing committee
March 88	- invitations to lecturers/appointment of the dean for the course
April	- brochure/information/application forms
June 30	- deadline for submission of applications
August	- final selection of participants
	- reply letters out
September	- collection of lectures (for reproduction)
October	- preparation of course materials
	- last-minute preparations in Manila
November 5 - 6	- basic hands-on computer course
November 7 - December 16-	course proper

- 7 - 8 November - A 1 - 2
- 9 - 10 November - A 3
- 11 November - A 4
- 14 - 15 November - B
- 16 - 18 November - C
- 21 Nov. - 16 Dec. - D (morning sessions)
- Practical work (afternoon sessions)

(Letters refer to course components)

#### X. Participants / Requirements for admission

The proposed number of participants is 30 maximum, to be selected on a regional basis. The majority of participants are envisaged to come from developing countries. The suggested break-down of participants is as follows: seven from Latin America, seven from Africa, nine from Asia and seven from the "North", i.e. countries in Europe and North America, Australia and New Zealand, where often individuals from developing countries are active in human rights information and documentation work.

Priority will be accorded to applicants who are presently and actively involved in human rights documentation and information handling. An applicants' background as well as prospects for the future will be considered during recruitment.

Those without prior hands-on experience on computers should come to Manila two days in advance of the course for basic computer operations instructions.

#### XI. Working language

The working language of the course is English; in the selection of participants this will be made clear.

#### XII. Venue for lectures / Accomodation

Lectures and other course activities will be held at the University of the Philippines College of Law Complex.

For the convenience of the participants, suggested accomodation would be at a student hostel in the vicinity of the University of the Philippines.

#### XIII. Staff requirements

- Six to seven lecturers (three or four should be from the Philippines)
- Course leader: Kofi Kumado, University of Legon, Ghana
- Instruction coordinator and rapporteur: Aida Noval Rodriguez, Mexican Academy for Human Rights, Mexico
- Course secretary: Lalaine Sadiwa, Philippines

#### XIV. Course / Accomodation fees

Fees are fixed at 1750 US\$ per participant. This shall cover the course fee, cost of board and lodging, materials for the course and other expenses during the course.

#### XV. Scholarships

Scholarships are envisaged to be provided either by HURIDOCS or by donors directly to those coming from developing countries. HURIDOCS and the organizing committee will inform donor agencies and provide them with the necessary information. Participants from developed countries will have to bear their own expenses, but will be given concessionary rates for board and lodging.

**APPENDIX 2**

Training course  
**Human Rights Information Handling in Developing Countries**

Manila, 7 November - 16 December 1988

*Course Leader:* **Kofi Kumado**  
 University of Ghana, Faculty of Law  
*Course Coordinator:* **Aida Maria Noval**  
 Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos

*Topic:* *Lecturer:*

**Part I**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Historical and Philosophical Development of Human Rights  | Reynaldo Ty<br>(University of the Philippines, Political Science Department)  |
| 2. International Human Rights Laws and Instruments / Categories and Generations of Human Rights                  | Merlin M. Magallona<br>(University of the Philippines, College of Law)  |
| 3. International Humanitarian Law  | Philip Sordet and Pierre Delacoste<br>(International Committee of the Red Cross)  |
| 4. Roles and Functions of Inter-Governmental and Governmental Human Rights Organizations in Developing Countries | Vitit Muntarbhorn<br>(Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok Faculty of Law)   |
| 5. Roles and Functions of Governmental Offices/Institutions  | Purificacion V. Quisumbing<br>(Department of Foreign Affairs, Philippines)<br>Commissioner Abelardo Aportadera<br>(Philippine Commission on Human Rights) |
| 6. Amnesty International: Structures and Procedures  | Agneta Pallinder (Amnesty International)  |
| 7. Roles and Functions of Non-Governmental Human Rights Organizations in Developing Countries                    | Sister Mariani Dimaranan<br>(Task Force Detainees of the Philippines)   |
| 8. The United Nations: Structures and Procedures   | Manfred Nowak (Netherlands Institute of Human Rights)<br>Hans Thoolen (Centre for Documentation on Refugees, UNHCR)                                       |
| 9. Human Rights and Documentation  | Kumar Rupesinghe (HURIDOCS)   |

**Part II**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 10. Human Rights Information Handling  | Lise Bruun (Danish Refugee Council)<br>Bjørn Stormorken (HURIDOCS) |
| 11. Electronic Exchange of Information | Dave Spooner (INTERDOC)  |

**APPENDIX 3**

**Training course Human Rights Information Handling  
in Developing Countries  
Manila, 7 November - 16 December 1988**

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## APPENDIX 4

FULL SUMMARIES OF LECTURES AND DISCUSSIONSOpening Ceremony

The task of introducing the training course, the invited guests and the participants was performed by *Prof. M. Magallona*, Director of the International Studies Institute of the Philippines, which was one of the sponsors of the course. The inauguration of the course was reviewed by two Philippine newspapers.

The official opening ceremony and welcome address on behalf of the University of the Philippines was kindly performed by *Dr. Ernesto G. Tabujara*, Chancellor of the University of the Philippines. Dr. Tabujara briefly reviewed the historical development of humanity and noted that, over the years, a lack of consciousness on human rights issues has often delayed major changes needed to achieve their respect and full enjoyment. He stressed the importance of human rights documentation work in raising public awareness of today's situation of widespread violations. In this context, he praised the course as being not only necessary but timely. He welcomed participants and organizers to the Philippines and in particular to the University, and wished them success.

*Senator Wigberto Tanada*, Chairperson of the Senate Human Rights Committee, delivered the keynote address. Speaking under the title Human Rights Advocacy: Documentation, Solidarity and Struggle, he began by noting how ironic it was that in spite of the general acceptance of the principles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, these rights are still violated in many countries around the world. While on the whole, there seemed to exist world-wide sufficient laws designed to uphold these rights, the necessary will and desire to enforce them have been lacking. A gap has thus developed between the stated aspirations and their enforcement.

The honorable Senator stressed the importance of praising and acknowledging the courageous stand, the commitment and risks taken by activists throughout the developing countries of the so-called Third World. Human rights advocates have themselves become the targets of repression. The record of human rights activists who have been murdered, detained, tortured or subjected to all kinds of harassment throughout the Third World countries has been alarming and, recent developments suggest, has been growing. The tools needed to tackle the problem could no longer be treated in isolation. For the task was beyond any single organization, country or advocate. It required solidarity and collaborative efforts on a wide scale, and the work of non-governmental organizations in this respect has been critical.

Senator Tanada drew attention to the complexity and diversity of human rights work and the creative talents needed. He was of the view that the provision of objective, professional and accurate documentation which lent itself to easy and expeditious dissemination was not only essential but absolutely crucial to the effectiveness of the work of human rights advocates.

The information provided must be credible as well as comprehensive. It must be seen by all forces of society, including those hostile to the cause of human rights, as "unimpeachable". It required constant refining of the information processing system to meet the challenges and potential of new technology to address the violations of human rights on the massive scale that we have all become witnesses to in today's world. Senator Tanada invited the audience to recognize that effective and efficient human rights information handling and documentation would help the militant forces of peace and development to triumph against those of violence and dehumanization. Lives would be saved and violations deterred or discouraged thereby.

While the future remained bleak, the Senator was encouraged, he said, by initiatives such as the present training course. By emphasizing competence-building in human rights information handling in developing countries, such courses would ensure that the cause of human rights

would ultimately triumph. He praised the vision of the organizers and expressed the hope that, in the interests of humanity, the participants would apply themselves assiduously to the course.

The closing remarks were given by the Course Leader, *Mr. Kofi Kumado* of the Faculty of Law, University of Ghana, Legon. He said that the course was significant for three reasons. Firstly the participants were from organizations operating in developing countries. Secondly, it was taking place in a developing country. And thirdly, the host country was the Philippines whose Constitution, formulated after the recent demonstration by her people of their sovereign right to rid themselves of a dictator, made clear commitments to the people's right to information and communication – an issue whose realization was the raison d'être of the present course.

Often, he noted, human rights workers were so busy generating information that little time was devoted to recording it for dissemination to fellow advocates. Being thus unaware of the work of others in the same field, we were constantly engaged in "re-inventing the wheel". But given the slenderness of our resources, we can ill-afford such an approach. What we needed most were the solidarity and support which we could give each other. He invited the participants to reflect on the information needs of the cause of human rights especially during this year in which we celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He was particularly glad that the course was taking place at this time when we have all become witnesses to the vast explosion in information technology. This development underscored the importance of being able to record and disseminate what we record in forms and systems that make it possible for us to share and utilize our information more efficiently.

Consequently, Mr. Kumado stressed, the course was aimed at "training the trainers". Namely, sharing the information handling skills in such a way that the participants would be able to duplicate what they would learn in their own countries and regions. One of the expectations of the sponsors was that the sum total of these duplications would further increase the quality and, therefore, the credibility of the information coming from the non-governmental human rights organizations.

On behalf of HURIDOCs and the co-sponsors, PAHRA and ISIP, the Course Leader thanked the University of the Philippines at Diliman generally and its College of Law in particular for placing the necessary pedagogical facilities at the disposal of the course.

### **Participant Introductions**

The first session of the course was devoted to the participant introductions. The 26 participants, 15 from Asia, 7 from Latin America, 2 from Africa, 1 from Palestine and 1 from the United States, were requested to introduce themselves and their personal background, to briefly describe the mandate, structure and activities of their organizations and to explain the specific work in which they were involved. Based on this, participants were asked to express their expectations from the course.

As expected, all participants were somehow involved in information or documentation handling in various subject areas related to human rights and development. Their expectations from the course reflected common interests which could be summed up in the following way: to broaden their knowledge and understanding of human rights concepts; to identify and clarify human rights issues critical to their work; to acquire, improve and upgrade their skills and knowledge of documentation systems, procedures and tools; to seek standardization in recording and exchange of information; to acquire first-hand experience and an overall understanding of automated systems for recording and retrieving information. Finally, participants expected to share experiences and know-how with fellow participants and resource people and to exchange information within a possible network of similar organizations. On the technical aspects, particular mention was made of the need to discuss classification and indexing schemes as well as retrieval methods suitable to human rights information work. At different times during the



course, participants presented aspects of their work, shared experiences, new projects, mentioned specific needs and suggested creative solutions to identified difficulties. Some of these presentations were structured, but most were delivered spontaneously during the discussion of specific issues.

### **History and Philosophy of Human Rights / Prof. Reynaldo Ty**

The point of departure for this vast topic was the presentation of the most distinctive features of both the historical and the idealist or Utopian philosophical approaches to understanding human rights. These perspectives were discussed, confronted and related to concrete realities. A briefer outline on the eclectic approach, combination of the two others, was exposed, illustrated with the theology of liberation and debated in relation to human rights situations.

The various components of society were desegregated and discussed in detail, in particular the economic and ideological factors, their interrelation and their respective role in the development of human rights. The final analyses indicates that human rights are to be looked at in an overall view of society but taking into account the various components of economy and ideology.

An outline of the most salient features of the economic and socio-political stages that have marked the evolution of society was presented and related to the emergence and development of the corresponding human rights. The conceptualization of the latter was analysed through the works of the world's great thinkers and philosophers and the various trends prevalent during each historical period. Particular attention was paid to recent historical events in the so-called Third World countries and their contribution to the conceptualization of the rights of peoples such as the right to self-determination.

From a more specific human rights approach, their evolution through history, their reflection in practice, standards and laws was presented. Particular issues were debated such as the "universality" of rights, the relationship between them and law and the issue of responsibility for ensuring the protection of human rights. These three aspects were further discussed by participants in the corresponding workshop, the main conclusions of which follow.

In principle, HUMAN rights are universal to all HUMAN beings and they relate to basic rights such as the right to life and dignity. However, this poses the need to satisfy basic human needs as a precondition for human rights to be plausible. Therefore, development and peace are crucial rights to pursue.

Responsibility for the protection of human rights falls on all individuals and civil society but primarily on the state, independently of the type of government or political system adopted. If the state fails to fulfill its duty, it is the responsibility of individuals, groups and society at large to struggle for human rights respect and to exert pressure so that the state assumes its inherent responsibility. If individuals commit violations and are held responsible, a contradiction arises between punishment of human rights violators being a violation of his/her own rights. It could also be an evasion of bearing the state responsible by punishing individuals acting on its behalf or with its annuity.

It is important to consider human rights from both a legal and a moral perspective since they are inevitably moral and human rights law is necessary. The relationship between law and the reality of human rights is direct and it is necessary to understand them. What is stated in the law is not necessarily practiced. It was considered that existing law and judicial procedures must be used to monitor and improve respect for human rights.

Additionally, people's action, including education on human rights, is needed to foster their respect. A free flow and easy access to information should also be sought since it was felt that

at present, these were restricted. The effectiveness of the previous actions can be greatly improved if they are integrated to wider dissemination and joint work with the international community, in particular with international NGOs.

#### **International Law of Human Rights / Prof. Merlin M. Magallona**

The development of contemporary international law was presented from a historical perspective since before World War I. In this context, the concept of "humanitarian intervention", the safeguard of so-called minority rights and the emergence of international conventions for the suppression of slavery were discussed. The conception of human rights that prevailed in the League of Nations, the relevant provisions of its Covenant, other conventions elaborated under its auspices and the mechanisms and procedures followed in cases of violations were also reviewed. Particular mention was made of the Mandate System of Trust Territories and the establishment of the ILO.

The atrocities perpetrated by fascism during World War II, the response of the Allied Powers and post-war events gave the historical setting for new developments in the conception of human rights. The relationship between international peace, security and human rights was clearly identified in this period and paved the way for the establishment of the United Nations as a body which should provide the necessary mechanisms and procedures to prevent the horrors of fascism and war to happen again. Human rights were conceived as part of the international ordre publique.

The most salient features of human rights concepts in the UN Charter, amongst them, equality of rights, protection of minorities, self-determination, social, economic and cultural rights and the right to development, peace and environment, were analysed in the light of contemporary historical developments. These underlying principles and the human rights provisions in the UDHR, the Covenants and other UN instruments were discussed at length together with problems encountered in the prevailing definitions and their applicability.

Particular problems in the International Protection of Human Rights were identified. The delicate relationship between international protection and the doctrine of domestic jurisdiction as well as the status and access that States and Individuals have to international mechanisms of protection were reviewed in relation to the two Covenants and to other international instruments such as the following Conventions: Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; On the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; On the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid; On the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; Against Discrimination in Education and the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Prof. Magallona also presented a brief introduction to European, African, American and Asian developments in regional protection of human rights.

#### **Relationship between Domestic Law and Public International Law as Applied to Human Rights / Mr. Kofi Kumado**

It is important to appreciate the relationship between municipal law (meaning the domestic laws of a country including its Constitution) and public international law rules as this relationship affects the application of international human rights law.

Basically, there are two schools of thought: monism and dualism. The first conceives the legal structure globally with international laws at the apex and, in the event of a conflict, subordinates domestic laws of any country to international law rules. The dualist school separates the legal system of a country from the legal system that regulates the relationship of

nations, thus, dualism conceives international and municipal law rules as being applicable in different domains. In this conception, an international law rule does not apply automatically to a domestic situation unless it has been formally incorporated into domestic law through the appropriate domestic legislative process.

It is important to understand that constitutional theory draws a distinction between the power to enter into a treaty or negotiate an international agreement, power exercised by the Executive, and the power, which lies in the Legislative, to make the treaty operative in any particular country. The source of information to establish the type of relationship between the two legal systems is provided by the country's constitution. If the latter provides for a monist relationship, an international agreement applies within the domestic sphere upon ratification. If the constitution is dualist, the international law rules would have to be transformed into domestic law by the same processes by which law is made within the country, namely by legislating the whole treaty or agreement.

Sometimes, a provision in a treaty may have direct effect, even for the monist system, depending on whether the treaty is "self-executing" or not, that is, whether the treaty or provision thereof contemplates any action by the domestic legislation process to implement it.

The effect that the respective laws will have on a human rights NGO's campaign can be described as follows. If the NGO operates in a monist system, then it must work for ratification of the international human rights agreements and thereafter it can add the agreement to its array of weapons. On the other hand, if it operates in a dualist system, the NGO cannot stop at ratification but must also work to have the international convention transformed into domestic law. Otherwise, it will be futile to appeal to the international standards in the domestic aspect of the human rights battle. This, of course is not to suggest that ratification per se is useless for a dualist country; only that it is not enough.

#### **Introduction to International Humanitarian Law: Human Rights in Armed Conflict / Mr. Philip Sordet and Mr. Pierre Delacoste**

The presentation began with a definition and description of international humanitarian law (IHL) as a set of principles and rules which set limitations to the use of violence in time of armed conflict in order to protect individuals, both combatants and civilian population, from the unnecessary effects of violence in war and, by extension, to protect objects not directly serving military purposes. The difference with human rights law is clear since human rights do not apply only in time of armed conflict. Another difference is that, although IHL has as a main objective the protection of human life, it does not question the death penalty applied in times of exception; it only seeks to ensure a fair trial and/or due process.

The historical development of IHL has taken place either by custom as an unwritten law in the practice of tribes, peoples and communities or by inter-state bilateral or multilateral agreements. The first multilateral agreement was the Convention of the wounded in armies in the field, signed in Geneva on August 22, 1864. The "Law of Geneva", as the agreement became known, has been updated and extended in several occasions. In 1949, four Geneva Conventions, which are still in force, were adopted to protect the wounded and sick in armed forces in the field; wounded, sick and shipwrecked members of armed forces at sea; prisoners of war and civilian persons in time of war. At present, although there are more state parties adhered to these conventions than to the UN Charter, only 66 have ratified the additional protocols which came into force in 1978. Protocol I relates to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts while Protocol II relates to the protection of victims of non-international armed conflicts. The latter issue was identified as being the most difficult in IHL and that the determination of the existence of an internal conflict is as yet unresolved.

The history of IHL somehow indicates that it has always been "one war behind" in the development of instruments for protection. Although one of its basic prohibitions is the use of non-discriminating weapons, eg. chemical, there is not yet any provision for the most non-discriminating of all weapons, nuclear.

The implementation of international humanitarian laws draws upon legal mechanisms and on non-legal, practical considerations. Amongst the legal provisions, the Geneva Conventions define the role of the ICRC and of the Red Cross and assign specific tasks to it, namely: to visit and interview, without witnesses, prisoners of war; to provide relief to the population of occupied territories; to search for missing persons and to forward family messages to prisoners of war and civilians; to offer its good offices to facilitate the institution of safety zones, hospitals and localities and to receive applications from protected persons. Under the Geneva Conventions the ICRC has also a right of initiative, that is, it may offer its humanitarian services wherever it feels necessary although they can only take place with the government's consent. This prerogative is applied to visit prisoners in various countries. Prevention and dissemination of information on IHL and ICRC are also important tasks undertaken by ICRC.

The structure of ICRC, its decision making bodies and the composition of its budget were explained in relation to the need to maintain its principles of impartiality, neutrality, independence and universality. Various issues were raised by participants in relation to ICRC's policy on confidentiality of information; on the usefulness and efficiency of its work if it is only defined as advocating humanitarian issues and not addressing the political aspects that generate these; the working relationship between ICRC and human rights non-governmental organizations.

Of particular importance was the presentation of the Central Tracing Agency of ICRC, whose main tasks were stated to be: to obtain and record all information which might enable dead, wounded or missing persons to be identified and to pass information to next of kin if necessary; to facilitate correspondence between members of families separated by events; to trace people who are missing or of whom their relatives have had no news; issue various types of documents, such as certificates of captivity or death and travel papers. The Agency's files hold over 60 million personal index cards of prisoners, refugees and the missing. The documentation techniques followed for recording and filing information were briefly described. An aspect identified as being of great importance is that of safety and security of files as well as speed in the retrieval of information. This considerations are taken into account in the process of automation that the CTA is undergoing.

#### **Roles and Functions of Inter-governmental and Governmental Human Rights Organizations / Prof. Viti Muntarbhorn**

There are a number of salient issues which are contextual to human rights in a given society and which must be critically analysed and apprehended: the identification of the State as the prime responsible for the protection of human rights and also their main violator; a country's economy and stage of development bear directly on human rights as do the domestic laws; the role of individuals, sectors of society and society at large as the main actors is key to human rights; external factors can also affect, for example, international public opinion and pressure by the international community on the government. It is a fact that little care is given to preventing human rights violations, rather, most efforts emerge after these have occurred and are therefore geared towards protection, cure and promotion. NGOs tend to be more concerned with civil and political rights rather than with socio-economic and cultural rights. Following a discussion of these contextual issues, participants split into four groups with the objective of debating and presenting in a role play the position of government, civil society, NGOs and international community in relation to the human rights situation in a given country.

Prof. Muntarbhorn explained that the development of inter-governmental organizations can be looked at in the historical perspective of the nation and state building and consolidation processes of this century as well as by highlighting crucial events such as the World War II and the emergence of the League of Nations.

Next, the lecturer made a detailed presentation of the United Nations system, its main organs, structure, functions and roles. In this context, the General Assembly's composition and catalytic role were analysed as well as the nature and impact of its resolutions. ECOSOC's composition and mandate to make recommendations for the promotion of human rights and to set up subsidiary institutions to deal with particular aspects of the matter were reviewed. The composition and mandate of the Commission of Human Rights and its Sub-commission on prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities were looked at in detail, particularly in relation to their following functions: preparation of studies, recommendations and treaties on human rights; setting up of working groups, both formal and informal and the appointment of special rapporteurs. It is important to note that in the early stages of the Commission's work, it looked at human rights situations from a geographical perspective and analysed country's situations. Over the years, a complementary approach has evolved which looks at violations in a thematic way. The latest report on the 1988 period of sessions of the Commission shows the utilization of both approaches to deal with the complexity of human rights situations around the world.

An introductory explanation to the procedures and mechanisms for lodging complaints and communications to the UN was given from the texts of the relevant resolutions as well as from practice. The minimum requirements for an individual to be able to place a complaint as well as those for the communication to be accepted were presented and discussed.

Prof. Muntarbhorn concluded his presentation with an introduction to the origins, composition, machinery, procedures and instruments of the regional systems, illustrating their operation with concrete cases that had been dealt with in either the European, American or African systems. The latter is not yet fully consolidated and more than in the other two, political bias and will to implement the procedures is being determinant. The absence of an Asian system for the protection of human rights was examined from a contextual analysis of the regional situation.

**Roles and Functions of Governmental Human Rights Offices and  
Institutions: the Philippine Situation**  
*/ Purificacion V. Quisumbing*

An overview was presented of the evolution of the Philippine legal provisions for human rights from the martial law regime of Marcos to the present constitution in which a clear statement of principles guarantees respect to the inherent dignity of human beings. A reflection of recent history can be found in specific provisions against torture, inhumane treatment and abolition of death penalty as well as retribution for damage to victims of human rights violations. For the first time in the Philippines, there are 19 sections dealing with social justice and human rights in which provisions are made regarding social and economic rights such as housing. Another important guarantee is the protection of disadvantaged or special groups and the creation of autonomous regions or special areas where the right to self-determination is taken up. The constitution provides for sectorial representations of, for example, indigenous populations, workers, women and the handicapped.

In relation to UN instruments, the Philippines holds a very high score of adhesion and ratification due to the clear commitment on the part of the government towards safeguarding human rights and adherence to international instruments of protection.

A detailed presentation was made of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs of the Foreign Affairs Ministry. Its main objectives are to reaffirm

the government's commitment to international standards and instruments; to sharpen the links with international organizations; to frame a foreign affairs policy which protects and help the thousands of Philippino citizens abroad, both legal and illegal and to implement the provisions in the UN Charter for freedom, peace and development. Several questions were raised in relation to Philippino workers abroad, for example, how is the status of legality or illegality determined, why do they go abroad, what provisions are taken by the government to provide and protect sources of employment in the country. In response, an analysis was made of three determinant factors which shape the human rights situation in the Philippines: historical, structural and institutional and socio-psychological. The recent past is preventing the full respect of human rights because, although the government's policy in this field is diametrically opposed to the previous regime, the structures and officers remain and it has left a barrage of social and psychological attitudes which are not always prone to human rights protection. The economic situation was also identified as a determinant national factor which affects human rights. Other deterrents were also identified: the burden of foreign debt, the practically intact structure of the national army and the presence of the US military bases.

At participants' questioning of validity of the government's assumed concern for the implementation and protection of human rights, a critical response was given indicating that governmental human rights institutions are useful to set the process in motion. The means to do this could be to exert pressure on the government from within, to raise consciousness and to bridge the gap between standards and norms and the reality. These institutions were considered to provide a starting point to try to enforce the prevailing legal standards and norms.

**Roles and Functions of Governmental Human Rights Offices and  
Institutions: the Case of the Philippine Commission of Human  
Rights (PCHR) / Commissioner Abelardo Aportadera**

The Commission was established as an independent constitutional office and it cannot be abolished, except through a constitutional amendment. Its primary concern is not only to expose human rights violations but to build up cases based on data gathered from various sources and make recommendations, raise consciousness through education and dissemination of information. Its objectives are to prevent violations as well as to promote the protection of human rights. The Commission investigates all human rights violations "even-handed", independently of the perpetrator although it is acknowledged that the prime responsibility lies on State. The Commission is the leading government agency for human rights but it does not hold the monopoly on the matter. In Congress there are the respective human rights commissions; local and provincial governments have human rights offices and even the Armed Forces have a human rights desk.

Through a presidential decree, the PCHR was given the task to develop human rights issues within the curricula at all levels of formal education. The programme for primary level is concluded and work has begun on secondary level curricula. An acute shortcoming in this area is the lack of educational materials on the subject.

The structure of the Commission was explained, and in particular the mode of operation of the central and regional offices which have been set up in every province. Based upon the need for better and wider monitoring of violations, setting up of sub-regional offices is planned for 1989. The regional offices submit monthly reports in a standard format for evaluation of the human rights situation all over the country.

When conducting an investigation, the Commission has the power to cite government officials. It is a fact that private citizens are hesitant to come forward and denounce their cases. One of the Commission's functions is to monitor human rights cases in the administrative judicial and para-judicial instances. Until now, this has been done through indirect initiatives. However,

as from November 1988, the Commission's lawyers have been granted prosecutory powers and will be able to take up cases in court. An important area to consider is that of witnesses protection. So far, the Commission has sought cooperation with NGO to protect ordinary witnesses and is currently seeking a special budget for the protection of special witnesses, for example those involved in cases filed against the army. In carrying out its mandate, members of the PCHR have been subjected to harassment as a form of pressure to drop a case or take a more lenient attitude.

The Commission also has visitorial powers which are used to verify allegations of torture and monitor detention conditions of prisoners. The PCHR is not only concerned with civil and political rights but it also monitors cases of social, economic and cultural rights such as forced evictions for demolition since the right to shelter is being violated.

An important concern is to seek standardization of figures and statistics, particularly with those NGOs who provide information to the Commission. After comparing numbers, the discrepancies are evaluated and the Commission requests further information on ambiguous cases in order to verify denunciations and check with its own regional offices. If cases are not validated with the proper documentation and certificates, they do not enter the PCHR system. It was suggested by participants that the discrepancy in figures might be due to the different criteria and definition of human rights violations used.

In response to participants' questions on the relationship and view that the Commission has with NGOs, particularly if the latter were viewed as "political opposition", it was stated that NGOs are seen as what they are, non-governmental organizations doing a valuable work and that there is interest on the part of the government to find possible areas of cooperation. In particular, it is necessary to address such issues as harassment of human rights lawyers and advocates.

Although the government offices may suffer from bureaucratic excesses, heavy and cumbersome structure, in relation to human rights it is important to appreciate that the debate takes place precisely inside government circles. If NGOs or other sectors are out of this debate, however loud their voice is outside, it will not weigh as much as a critical position presented inside the government.

### **Role and Functions of Human Rights Organizations in Developing Countries / Sister Mariani Dimararan**

The lecturer began by stating that whilst the condition of human rights in all parts of the world is far from ideal, it is in the so-called Third World that the most atrocious conditions for human beings, especially for the poor, deprived and oppressed, are witnessed. Hence, human rights NGOs play a key and dynamic role in working towards finding the solution of this situation. By their nature, NGOs are independent of government plans and programmes and are catalysts for meaningful changes. Human rights NGOs are active in areas of civil and political rights as well as on issues pertaining to social, economic and cultural rights. Depending on specific needs, interests, objectives and capability to respond to these, NGOs could primarily concentrate on fact-finding missions, documentation, welfare, legal assistance and dissemination of information. A brief look at various national and international NGOs provided a variety of activities undertaken for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Of particular importance are the NGOs' functions of education, standard-setting and the identification, prevention and seeking of solutions for human rights violations. Education ranges from explaining the concepts of human rights, providing information about existing rights, including legislation, regulations and norms to publishing information on violations. Standard-setting at the national level is important in order to bring about changes in the legislation and on the administrative regulations so as to better monitor respect for human rights. At the

international level, the standard-setting role of NGOs is reflected in the work done with the UN or with regional systems on the texts of new conventions and declarations, passing of resolutions and participation in events that promote ratification or moral enforcement of international instruments of protection. The function of prevention and identification of violations and the seeking of remedies to these may take the form of filing law suits, presenting evidence before regional and international bodies, creating public pressure to effect changes in government policy and helping the victims whose rights have been violated.

The role that human rights NGOs play in establishing and cultivating communication with international institutions such as the United Nations or the regional systems so that opinions and ideas can be transmitted to these fora was considered essential and unique. Those organizations with consultative status in the UN have performed their functions with dedication and impartiality and have drawn UN's attention to critical human rights' situations around the world. However, there is still a need to harness the potential of grassroots-based organizations working together within the framework of international bodies for the advancement of human rights.

Human rights work is essentially one of commitment to the promotion of real brotherhood of peoples and nations characterized by justice and respect for people's rights and human dignity. This work involves high risks to advocates' lives, family and even property. There is a security risk involved, both for individual advocates and organizations, particularly at the local level where the fear of raid of offices is always present. Particular and sophisticated forms of demobilization or paralyzation of human rights work such as psycho-logical terror and constant harassment can be used by repressive regimes. Labelling of human rights advocates or organizations as being "subversive" is an all too common difficulty they have had to face.

Human rights NGOs hold a great responsibility in solving human rights problems. Thus, there is a need to "think and plan big", not only at local or national levels but also regionally and internationally. It is a an imperative challenge to join hands and help one another, to forge links and create a human rights NGO system that enables NGOs to squarely face and confront those who violate human rights. As a Filipino advocate, the speaker also called for the consolidation of the Asian region in this struggle and for a more active South-South relationship.

The lecture provided material for an in-depth exchange of ideas among participants in a workshop following the lecture. Participants discussed some of the issues raised and related them to their own experience. A breakdown on how to develop in practice the functions of education, standard-setting and prevention and identification of violations was discussed and particular attention was given to research, investigation and documentation of human rights situations. Cooperation, exchange and solidarity amongst human rights NGOs was considered essential since the people they are concerned about, those whose rights are being violated, the deprived and repressed, and the violations suffered are striking and sadly similar. In relation to the problems faced by NGOs in the field of human rights, participants added the following: communication with similar organizations; general scarcity of resources, particularly financial; lack of training and sometimes of professionalism; hostile local and national climate where NGO activities are considered subversive.

### **Amnesty International: Structures and Procedures**

*/ Ms. Agneta Pallinder*

As a concrete example of the work of a human rights non-governmental organization, Agneta Pallinder presented the mandate, structure, activities and procedures of Amnesty International with particular reference to its documentation work.



The organization's mandate focuses primarily on seeking the immediate and unconditional release of those detained anywhere for their beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin, language or religion and who have not used or advocated violence: prisoners of conscience. The mandate has expanded to undertake actions seeking fair and prompt trials for all political prisoners and on behalf of those detained without charge or trial. AI opposes the death penalty and torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Through its network of members and supporters, AI takes up individual cases, mobilizes public opinion and seeks improved international standards for the treatment of prisoners. The method used is that of applying pressure on governments through: letter campaigns, general publicity, direct approach and the utilization of IGOs, especially the UNO system.

In the organizations' own view, a narrow but precise mandate and limited methods have been determinant in achieving efficiency and credibility. Participants questioned the mandate for not taking up cases of individuals tried for "crimes" other than related to conscience but result of socio-economic injustice. Also, if AI takes up cases of collective violations, it was difficult to understand why AI did not take up cases of forcefully displaced communities. This raised a discussion on AI being a western-oriented organization concerned with civil and political rights thus explaining the lack of recognition of other rights which, in developing countries, are overwhelmingly important, namely, those stemming from socio-economic conditions. The limitations of AI's mandate was explained by the case of Nelson Mandela, a prisoner of conscience not adopted by the organization because he has not denied links with violence.

The research and information processes at the International Secretariat were thoroughly explained from the reception of case information, its validation from a legal point of view, the factual background in which cases are contextualised, to the policy considerations and the decision on the best action to take. Various aspects were analysed as being crucial for efficiency, one of them was time and speed in implementing an urgent action but covering very strictly the assessment and verification of sources as well as the legal and contextual information underlying the case. Validation and sifting of documentation and information has to be as objective and accurate as possible, even though it was acknowledged that the product of this work, an urgent action or report, cannot be politically neutral if it is going to have an effect on the human rights situation.

The structure and interrelation of the documentation files at the International Secretariat were discussed and participants suggested that an important source of information in human rights work which has not been properly addressed for its recording and retrieval were the press-clippings.

The deliberations that followed the lecture touched on several issues. Firstly, there was consensus among participants on the recognition and respect gained by Amnesty International as a provider of credible and reliable information, although problems and delays in the acquisition of its publications were detected. It was also debated that sometimes it is difficult to understand the limitations of the mandate of Amnesty International, particularly because it is basically concerned with civil and political rights, with restricted or no practical recognition of other rights which in developing countries are overwhelmingly important: namely those stemming from socio-economic conditions and the constant violations that occur in this area.

### **The United Nations and Regional Systems: Structure and Procedures** **/ Mr. Manfred Nowak and Mr. Hans Thoolen**

The main characteristics of the United Nations and the regional American, African and European systems for the protection of human rights were traced through their respective emergence, composition, structures, specialized agencies and programmes and through the various charters and conventions developed within the framework of each one of them. Other

systems which are not fully operative but are in the process of developing human rights protection were looked at, in particular, the Asian situation, the League of Arab States, the Andean States and Eastern Europe.

The lecturers presented the various procedures established by the human rights instruments identified previously. These processes were closely examined and their effectiveness assessed, in terms of how they are implemented within the universal and the regional systems and of how individuals, NGOs and states can utilize them in their endeavour to defend, promote and protect human rights. Stress was made on the importance of learning and understanding the terminology intrinsic to the systems in order to ensure success through their respective procedural aspects.

The procedures looked at in detail were the following: state reports and inter-state complaints, and individual complaints under the specific human rights treaties; complaints under ECOSOC resolution 1503; ex-officio enquiries under ECOSOC resolution 1235 and other special procedures developed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights which can lead to public investigation through the appointment of working groups and special rapporteurs; preventive action carried out through visits, urgent actions and early warning systems; assistance to victims carried out by specialized agencies or programmes such as UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, Advisory Services and the Torture Fund; and political action.

Particular issues were discussed such as the important role played by NGOs within the systems; the need, usefulness and requirements for these organizations to achieve consultative status in the United Nations and the procedures which required of such status for NGOs to be able to participate. Another issue discussed was that of the meaning and ways of determining the existence of a "systematic pattern of gross violations of human rights".

In the group discussion that followed, participants concluded that the procedures in the universal and regional systems must not be underestimated but should rather be appraised critically in terms of their practical utilization. It was considered of vital importance to strive for the ideal declarations contained in the human rights charters and conventions to become a reality. Consensus was achieved on the need to strengthen the regional systems and instruments, and on the important role that NGOs can play in these fora.

#### **Politics and Sociology of Information / Dr. Kumar Rupesinghe**

In his lecture, Kumar Rupesinghe approached the main subject of the course in depth by presenting the conceptual and ideological issues of information and communication. The lecturer began by pointing out that information handling is crucial in the field of human rights as is the need for human rights NGOs to effectively manage and control their information and have it in the right form of delivery at the right time.

Dr. Rupesinghe then outlined the evolution and socio-political characteristics of information structures from the feudal social system to the capitalist society. Within the latter, a controversial analysis was made of the control of information being both a pre-condition and a means of holding and exercising power in international relations between developed and developing countries and within a national context where those with power also control and withhold information from the people. The lecturer also reviewed the impact of advanced computer and telecommunications technology as a further characteristic of the current information structure. He then singled out and evaluated the challenges faced by NGOs in the prevailing information structure and put forward strong arguments for the creation of a new, alternative international information order.

Looking at the three major systems in the human rights field - the Inter-governmental, the State and the NGO systems - the speaker evaluated that the latter is growing more rapidly due to the fact that NGOs have a global vision of their focus of interest, are flexible and creative

in their approach and methods and are participatory in their composition, decision making processes and in their activities. Given these characteristics and the need to share and exchange information, the conditions exist for the development of an NGO information system that can enable the member organizations to become the countervailing power to that of the violators, and thus become more effective in the protection and promotion of human rights.

In order to fruitfully exchange information within such a network, it is imperative to communicate in a "common language", that is, to standardize the forms in which information is exchanged through the use of standard formats. Dr. Rupesinghe concluded by explaining the concept of HURIDOCs as a linking network of human rights non-governmental organizations within which certain activities are undertaken in order to improve the forms and means of communication and exchange.

In the discussion that followed, various issues were debated at length: amongst others, the real extent to which member organizations of a network can preserve their integrity and autonomy, particularly in relation to a possible division of labour; the practicality of the latter was critically analysed by participants as was the concept of an alternative NGO global information system. It was concluded that, as a first step towards a wider network, an effective horizontal information and communication system at the local level had to be sought; and that in order to achieve this, training was vital as were the standard formats for recording, and more importantly, for exchanging information.

### **Information and Documentation Handling Systems and Processes**

*/ Ms. Lise Bruun*

During the third week of the course, the concept, components and ways of analysing an information system were presented followed by a theoretical presentation and practical work on each one of the processes involved in documentation handling. More specifically, these were: input through generation or collection of information; bibliographic and contents description of documents; classification, storage and filing; and output for retrieval and dissemination. Particular stress was placed on achieving compatibility through standardization of tools and processes. Several practical sessions were devoted to recording on the HURIDOCs SF for bibliographical units and periodical publications. During lectures and discussions, the particularities of human rights information and documentation were treated in detail.

The starting point for the vast subject was an introductory lecture presenting an overall view and general explanation of the three main components - Input, Processing and Output - of an information system, the latter being defined as a system where information is collected, processed, arranged and stored for the overriding purpose of achieving easy and efficient access as well as subject relevance for the users. Thus, an information system has a twofold objective, one of a technical nature which is to provide access to the information and a political aim which is to provide the information needed for intervention. The concept and general characteristics of an information system prevail whether the latter is a single documentation centre, one computer database or a wider system where several smaller documentation units are integrated in a network.

For an information system to be efficient, it is necessary to carefully and critically observe and analyse the context in which it operates, the policies which guide its development and the processes, tools and working methods involved. The way to perform this observation was the topic of the lecture on Information system analysis where, in addition to the general principles and methods to evaluate the three basic components of the system - Needs or Output, Sources or Input and Tools for processing -, two particular techniques to assess retrieval were explained: the recall ratio and the precision ratio.

The input component of the system implies the clear identification of three basic conditions for an adequate generation or collection of information: the criteria and policies for selection and acquisition, the categories of documentation to be covered and the sources where relevant information can be traced and located. It was emphasized that acquisition must not be left to chance but be the result of a series of decisions clearly set out in a policy or criteria for selection and acquisition. After a workshop followed by a general discussion, participants outlined a framework that could be used in the process of defining the acquisition policy. In this framework, the general context should be considered, both in relation to the organization's mandate and objectives, the users and their needs as well as in relation to the legal and political context in which the system operates; security was identified as a critical element to consider when dealing with human rights documentation. Other considerations to take into account are the subject and geographical scope of the information as well as other elements such as language, level, comparative importance and relevance to existing holdings and the need for current information versus or complementary to documentation for research purposes.

The type and form of the documentation as well as the reliability and quality of its contents must not be overlooked either. Two other criteria have to be taken into account, the first one being that of the processing capacity, the technical equipment, human resources and the space available. Last but not least, the budget available is a key element in defining the selection policy. An integral part of the latter has to be the criteria and periodicity for weeding the collection.

The first topic of the description and identification of documents to be dealt with was the bibliographical description or cataloguing, defined as the process of recording characteristic identification and physical descriptive data of a document according to set rules. The purpose of the bibliographic description is to provide each document with a unique reference so that it can be unambiguously identified when entered into and retrieved from the system. The product of this process is a set of bibliographic data where each component describes only one feature of the document. A set of rules for recording combined with a uniform order of presentation constitute a standard format, the prime objective of which is to achieve consistency within the system and compatibility between various information systems. The HURIDOCs SF were then introduced as being a set of formats for bibliographical recording and exchange of information devised in an attempt to meet the information needs of human rights and akin organizations involved in documentation handling and exchange. The considerations taken into account for the definition of the formats, the rules and principles upon which they are based, their suitability for both manual and computerized systems as well as their utility to interface between these, were explained, discussed and evaluated. A detailed explanation was given by the lecturer on the different fields of the HURIDOCs SF for Independent, Dependent and Serial bibliographic units as well as on the selection of the information and the precise rules for its standard recording on the formats. Several sessions were devoted to practical work with documents kindly lent by the Law Library of the University of the Philippines. During the sessions, the bibliographic level presented a certain degree of difficulty to participants and it was suggested that it should be more explicitly treated in the manual as well as the corporate authorship and the selection and recording of conferences.

A further level of documentation processing looked at was the contents description which consists of identifying the main concepts or subject-matter expressed in the materials. The general goals, characteristics, desired qualities, methods and tools involved in the process were presented and discussed. In particular, the nature, types, components and main features of documentary languages were presented; various examples were analysed to illustrate the order and grammatical form of terms, the hierarchical relationships between descriptors, their codification and the scope notes for clarity and unambiguity. Two particular ways of contents description and their respective characteristics and methodology were presented in detail: indexing and abstracting. In relation to the HURIDOCs SF, it was explained how the "Index" field is used and its potentiality for exchange purposes of a controlled vocabulary agreed upon within the network. It was also discussed how the "Free Text" field can be used for further in-

house indexing. Through interventions and discussion, participants made a strong case for the need to tackle the development of a human rights controlled vocabulary within the HURIDOCs network through the input of centres who have developed work in this area and seeking the advice of experts on the technical side for elaborating such a needed tool. The formation of a Task force on Indexing and Thesaurus was suggested.

For its importance in the retrieval process, and because it must not be confused with other forms of contents description such as indexing, classification was looked at in detail. To classify information was defined as being the process by which the overall subject of a document is determined in relation to certain classes and therefore, as a processing tool to group together like documents according to some common qualities or characteristics. Classification is a systematic way of ordering files and shelving documents following certain criteria which takes into account both physical and intellectual elements. This tool gives access to the physical location of a group of related information. It is important to stress that the classification only reflects the main subject dealt with in the documents but does not reflect the particular and inter-related issues treated; this is catered for by the indexing. The various structured classification systems (Universal Decimal Classification, Dewey and Library of Congress) which are widely used in library environments were explained and their main features were briefly outlined. The need to adopt, and most probably to develop a special classification system for a human rights documentation centre was discussed and the technical elements to do so in a consistent manner were explained, namely, the facets, structure and codification or signature nomenclature. In spite of the explanations given and the many questions posed by participants, the latter expressed that the difference between contents description through indexing and classification was an issue that remained unclear and would require further and joint work within the HURIDOCs network.

The following topic tackled was storage and filing, defined as the material processing of documents by which the latter are physically arranged and conserved. When considering this process it is important to take into account the use made of the materials, the human resources and equipment on hand as well as available space. The general features of the various forms of storage and filing for efficient retrieval and the three basic types of filing systems - numerical, systematic and mixed - were presented and their advantages and disadvantages for particular types of materials and uses were discussed. The criteria to adopt or develop storage and filing systems suitable for human rights documentation centres were looked at in relation to the characteristics of human rights information, the users' requirements and other considerations such as security. Microforms and full text data bases were also considered in this context.

The output element of information systems was considered from the perspectives of retrieval and dissemination of information. A retrieval system ought to facilitate the access to documents regarding their unique bibliographic identification, contents or subject matter, including geographical scope and their physical location. The results of the retrieval process should be as precise and speedy as possible within the potentialities and limitations of the system, be it manual or computerized. The characteristics and forms that retrieval takes in both types of systems were explained. In particular, the sets of cards needed for efficient manual retrieval were illustrated with examples. The structure of fields and files, with particular reference to searchable fields, in an automated system were conceptually defined and explained as components of data records. The use of subfields was also explored. The process and elements that need consideration when defining the components (fields and subfields) of a data record were exemplified through the use of a hypothetical Field Definition Table. Computer search requires of certain strategies of general application such as the boolean and relational operators and truncation, which were explained in broad terms. The possibility of searching in natural language was presented through Free text search.

The last subject presented was dissemination, defined as being the main function of an information system of providing the information required by the users. The process can involve

provision of the documents themselves, bibliographic references or tertiary products delivered directly through personal inquiries or indirectly on an exchange basis which can imply distribution and networking. Particular forms of consultation were looked at such as controlled or open access and loans and specific documentary products such as lists of recent acquisitions, bibliographies and abstracting services were analysed. Selective dissemination of information was discussed in its various applications which ranged from provision of information of special subject areas to individual user to exchange of data bases.

**Hands-on Computer Introductory Training**  
**/ Mr. Jojo Chan and Ms. Aida Maria Noval**

As two of the stated objectives of the course were to train participants intensively in the use of bibliographical standard formats and to provide them with the basic theoretical and practical elements of computerized information handling during the last three weeks of the programme, an introductory hands-on computer training course was offered during the first three weeks. This training was conducted by Jojo Chan and Aida Maria Noval with the valuable collaboration of the participant Carlos Saldarriaga from APRODEH, a Peruvian organization.

A survey of the participants' level of competence in the use of computers, showed a significant gap between those who had sound experience and those who had never used them. The range of expertise between the two extremes was varied, so gradual training was required in order to achieve homogeneity in computer handling by the fourth week when intensive practical application of software and programming techniques were planned.

The basic formal training was scheduled for the week-ends of the first two weeks of the course, total twelve hours. Practical exercises set in advance and the use of a self-teaching typing programme were organized during weeks two and three in order to provide participants with as much practice as possible. The training covered basic notions of hardware; the functions and use of the system components, particularly booting and agility in the use of the keyboard; and basic operations with internal and external DOS commands. A total of 18 participants underwent this introductory training, with very satisfactory results.

**Computerized Information Handling / Mr. Bjørn Stormorken**

The subject of "Computerized information handling" was conducted by Bjørn Stormorken who competently introduced participants to the intricacies of computers, software and automated data processing. The lecturer led participants up to a level of proficiency that enabled them not only to accurately evaluate automation and software packages for use in their respective places of work but also to efficiently install and use application programmes.

Of particular importance was the production of a data base using DBase III+, where each participant defined and programmed a mailing list. The latter was done in order to produce indexes, search and retrieve information and create specific products. Also, the thorough learning and application of the BIBSYS programme using the HURIDOCs Standard Formats for bibliographical Dependent, Independent and Serial Units resulted in a specific data base developed by the participants, who not only practiced recording in the formats but also learnt search and retrieval techniques, generation of indexes and inverted files, output of printed lists and catalogue cards and data packaging for exchange using the Bibtext programme. The technical aspects of standardization required for electronic exchange of information were also looked at in detail.

During these sessions, very useful manuals written by Mr. Stormorken were distributed to participants. The documents provided in-depth presentations and explanations on the various subjects covered, from a survey of computers to detailed instructions on the use of BIBSYS.

Through discussions and practical confrontation of the theory and guidelines contained in the documents, participants managed to improve and refine their content further. HURIDOCs has proposed that these materials are integrated by Bjorn Stormorken into a "Training manual on computerized information handling and the use of the HURIDOCs standard formats" geared towards human rights workers involved in documentation handling. Due to the felt need for such a tool and the pertinence of the materials used and evaluated during the course, participants made a strong recommendation for the manual to be concluded and distributed at the earliest possible within the HURIDOCs network.

Two topics of special interest were discussed within the framework of the main subject covered by Mr. Stormorken: "Data security and protection" and "Information technology and social issues". On the first topic, a distinction was made between data protection and data legislation, the latter being part of the national context in which an NGO works. Two main subjects were discussed: physical security measures to restrict access of unauthorized personnel to the data stored, and the protection provided by software for the same purpose. Emphasis was on the fact that security measures have to be proportional to the importance of keeping information safe, and must be carefully selected so that they deal adequately with the risks detected.

The subject of "Information technology and social issues" was presented by two participants, Vyva Aguirre and German Palacio from the Philippines and Colombia. Their presentation provided a survey of the meaning, sources, recipients and forms of technology transfer and an analysis its impact on society, particularly on developing societies, in relation to such issues as: information technology as power; its impact on production and therefore on the labour force; its effects on education; increased social fragmentation and individualization that can result from it, and the possible use of technology to exercise stronger forms of social surveillance and control.

After an intense discussion, participants concluded that "neutrality" of information technology would be a wrong assumption, since it has always been true that information and knowledge are power. There was general acknowledgment that, on the one hand, technology already exists and it is having a strong impact upon society; on the other, that technology is not only necessary but desirable to have. However, the most important aspect of technology is the use made of it and for whose benefit it is applied. In this sense, it was mentioned that NGOs should play an active role in adapting and modifying, and perhaps even in creating and developing technology that serves the needs, interests and goals of those who NGOs are concerned with and work for. It was considered important to be part of the historical process in technology and not to be dragged, or worse still, be overpowered by it.

#### Electronic Exchange of Information / *Mr. Dave Spooner*

This subject was dealt with by Dave Spooner, who gave two days of lectures on the theoretical aspects of the matter. He also conducted practical demonstrations on accessing and searching in a London located electronic mailbox and in the use of an encrypting programme to encode information before its transmission.

The lecturer surveyed electronic exchange of information and explained in detail four telecommunication systems: one computer to another through cable and through the use of a modem; the local Bulletin Board System (BBS) and the use of mailboxes; the International Bulletin Board; and the Packet Switching Network (PSN). The main characteristics of each of these systems as well as their modes of operation, possible uses, advantages and disadvantages were explained and discussed. In particular, the security aspect of transmitting data using electronic means was looked at, and a thorough analysis was made of the considerations that need to be taken into account: availability of technology; the level of development and reliability of the national computer network and telephone system; the initial and running costs

involved and the fact that computer languages used for electronic exchange are based on the romanian script and are therefore not suitable for transmitting in other alphabets.

For most participants, the wide-reaching possibilities of electronic exchange of information were new. Participants became very interested in keeping informed of developments within the HURIDOCs network. They felt the need to explore the situation in their own countries and discuss the subject within their organizations.

### Closing Ceremony

On 16 December, the Closing ceremony was conducted by *Prof. Merlin Magallona*, Director of ISIP, who briefly outlined the event that was about to conclude and highlighted its main objectives, characteristics and attainments. Prof. Magallona then introduced *Attorney Augusto Sanchez*, Chairperson of PAHRA.

Attorney Sanchez shared his thoughts on the commitments and ultimate objectives of human rights advocacy and congratulated participants and organizers for having successfully achieved the objectives proposed for the course. The speaker stressed that by having had the opportunity to undergo this training, participants had acquired new commitments to reproduce and recreate their enhanced knowledge and skills and to foster a more efficient dissemination of information so as to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights.

*Representative Anna Dominique Coseteng* delivered the closing speech, in which she outlined some of the most compelling demands imposed by human rights work and stressed the need to keep on struggling with renewed energy, creative ideas and ever increasing professionalism in order to achieve the ultimate objective shared by human rights advocates: respect and full enjoyment by all human beings of their inherent human rights. Rep. Coseteng then presented each participant with a certificate of attendance.

Prof. Magallona, as representative of one of the co-sponsoring organizations, congratulated the successful conclusion of this very important event, which he defined as a landmark in training human rights advocates and from the experience of which much could be learnt for future endeavours.



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